



## Novel Resource #5

The World According to Humphrey by Betty G. Birney  
Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, NY 2004

### About the Author:

Official website: [bettybirney.com](http://bettybirney.com)

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The author's website is very kid friendly. The first thing you notice is that part 2 for Humphrey lovers has been published – [Trouble According to Humphrey](#). There is a little blue house where she does all her writing and thinking. She says the door is always open to anyone who want to come in. Sometimes he dog, Desi, comes out to visit her or lizards wander in.

She wrote her first "book" at age seven. It was called "Teddy Bear in the Woods" and was followed by a sequel. Luckily, her parents encouraged her writing and he sister, [Janet](#), was a great writer and role model.

She didn't just write, however. When she wasn't roller-skating (her favorite pastime), she was riding her bike, [playing piano](#), swimming, reading, playing cards and board games or just hanging out with her friends. She loved school, but she loved vacations, too!

She has an entire section on the website for Humphrey fans. You can even fill out a form if you want to babysit Humphrey! She has many activities for kids to do – puzzles and quizzes over the books. There are teacher guides for the books to download also!

When the Disney Channel was started, she became a writer and story editor for WELCOME TO POOH CORNER. Since then, she's written more than 200 episodes of animated and live-action television programs including MADELINE, DOUG, BOBBY'S WORLD, DUMBO'S CIRCUS, THE PUZZLE PLACE, CAMP CANDY, LITTLE MOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE, WHERE'S WALDO, FRAGGLE ROCK and ZOOBILEE ZOO. That's right, she write cartoons! She also wrote a number of award-winning after school specials and many interactive CD-ROM programs, including the award-winning "Berenstain Bears on their Own," "Richard Scarry's Busiest Neighborhood Ever," and "The Crayon Factory."

**But her first love - going back to age seven - is writing books. Over the years, she's written more than 25 children's books, many of them on Disney themes.**

Beth Tarter

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**Books written by Betty G. Birney:**

**MIDDLE-GRADE NOVELS**

[The Seven Wonders Of Sassafras Springs](#) - Atheneum - Summer, 2005

[Trouble According To Humphrey](#) - Putnam - February, 2007

[Friendship According To Humphrey](#) - Putnam - February, 2005

[The World According To Humphrey](#) - Putnam - February, 2004

**PICTURE BOOKS**

[Pie's In The Oven](#) - Houghton Mifflin

[Tyrannosaurus Tex](#) - Houghton Mifflin

[Let's Play Hide And Seek](#) - Scholastic

**WINNIE-THE-POOH BOOKS**

[I Am Winnie The Pooh](#) - Western

[Winnie-The-Pooh And The Merry Christmas Mystery](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Afraid Of The Dark](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Jealous](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody Won't Share](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Messy](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Grumpy](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Not Listening](#) - Western

[Oh Bother, Somebody's Fibbing](#) - Western

[Winnie-The-Pooh And The Missing Pots](#) - Western

[Half-A-Haycorn Pie](#) - Western

[Winnie-The-Pooh And The Little Lost Bird](#) - Western

**OTHER DISNEY-THEMED BOOKS**

[The Little Mermaid](#) - Western

[Sleeping Beauty](#) - Western

[Toy Story](#) - Western

[Beauty And The Beast](#) - Western

[Bambi's Snowy Day](#) - Western

[Chip The Teacup](#) - Western

[Chip And Dale Rescue Rangers Save Little ReD](#) - Western

[Disney Babies Bedtime Stories \(co-writer\)](#) - Mallard Press

**OTHERS**

[Animaniacs: Meltdown At The Wax Museum](#) - Western

[Black Beauty](#) - Western

[Raja's Story](#) - St. Louis Zoo

[Who Am I?](#) - Little Simon

[What's My Job](#) - Little Simon

#### Annotation:

Ever had a class pet before? You would want Humphrey if you could have him. He is the class pet to the class of room 26 and he is the best. He helps all the children in the class and they do not even know it. He sneaks out of his cage at night and helps people in strange ways. He gets to go to a different home every weekend with a different student. That is his biggest fear – how will they take care of him? Will they remember to feed him? He usually has a good time, but sometimes it is kind of tricky. He likes all the children in the class but one, Garth. Garth does not like to take Humphrey home, feed him, or play with him. Humphrey finds out the Garth's dad is sick and cannot have animals in the house, so Humphrey is determined to get to Garth's house and help him to like him. As you are reading the book, you begin to root for Humphrey in all situations. He has a great big heart and just wants the kids in the class to learn and be happy. The author tells the story through Humphrey, so many things are funny. You end up learning how to jump from desk to desk and how to open his cage because it does not lock.

#### Booktalk:

Learning how to live through the eyes of a hamster? Welcome to the World According To Humphrey. This story is told totally through the experiences of a hamster and how he sees things and thinks about every day things. Humphrey's biggest fear is who from Class 26 will take him home for the weekend – will it be A.J.? or Sayeh? Or the principal? When the teacher moves away, what will the new teacher do with him? She does not like hamsters. To see how Humphrey makes it through the school year, start Reading the world According to Humphrey right now!

#### Characters:

Humphrey the hamster is the storyteller and main character in this book. He is the favorite pet to the teacher, Mrs. Brisbane. Mrs. Brisbane moves and the new teacher does not like hamsters. Humphrey can get in and out of his cage but does not tell anyone and he tries to solve many problems when he escapes. He befriends the night custodian and several of the children. Because Humphrey is so smart, he helps many of the children with their fears and concerns, and they do not even know it was Humphrey. He is a cute, loveable class pet who has a very defined goal – to help the children grow up... and even some of the adults.

The children, the custodian, and the teachers and principal all love Humphrey and want to take turns taking him home. They all learn to love him and learn from him.

**Conflict:** Humphrey's main conflict within himself is how to make the children in his classroom happy and how to help them solve their problems. He likes all the children in his class except for one, Garth. Humphrey struggles to find out why Garth does not like

him, and by the end he does. His external conflict is against the new teacher. Mrs. Brisbane loved him and she does not. She keeps him in the classroom in the dark, will not take him home on the weekends, and really does not care what happens to him.

**Conflict Resolution:**

Humphrey successfully helps all the children and learns to get along with the new teacher. She even takes him home for the weekend!! He also finds out that Garth really does want to take him home, but is not allowed to because of his father's illness. Eventually, they figure out a way to get Humphrey to Garth's house and everyone is delighted.

**Genre:** A wonderful story told through the eyes of an animal. Realistic fiction and fantasy play into the book very well together.

If you enjoyed The World According to Humphrey, you will also love:

Escaping the Giant Wave by Peg Kehret

Gooney Bird Green by Louis Lowry

Trading Place with Tank Talbott by Dori Hillstad

Owen Foote, Super Spy by Stephanie Greene

Other books by Betty G. Birney that you might enjoy are:

Trouble According to Humphrey

The Seven Wonders

The Princess and the Peabody's

Interest Level: 2-5 grade Reading Level: 4.2

**Read Aloud Passages:**

Chapter 2, Page 12-13

Humphrey has been left in his cage. He is nervous so he begins writing in his little notebook that the teacher gave him. He is longing to wander free and see what he can find. He is scared of the THUMPING he hears in the hallway coming towards him... but it is only the night janitor. This would keep the reader interested because of how the story is told by Humphrey.

Chapter 7, page 45 Humphrey notices that a girl in the class, who never raises her hand, has raised it. He is sooo excited but he cannot get the attention of the teacher. The feelings that Humphrey has are so well described that you want to keep reading to see what he will do.

**Setting:** Present day and time in Room 26 at Longfellow School

**Point of View:** The story is told through Humphrey's eyes so it would be first person.

Theme: This story is told according to a hamster. The title, The World According to Humphrey fits perfectly because everything that happens in the book does so because of what Humphrey thinks and believes. Even though he is just a hamster, he can help people and even change their lives. He even helps the janitor meet a girl by placing a date announcement from the paper on the overhead projector when no one is looking.

Across the curriculum connections:

An entire science unit can be taught regarding the care for animals, whether in the classroom or at home.

[bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/classroomresources.cfm](http://bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/classroomresources.cfm) This website is through the humane society and it contains what you need for an entire unit on animal care.

<http://www.picadome.fcps.net/lab/currl/animal/default.htm#Online%20Activities> is a great website for language arts. There are many web games to play - camouflage game is a great one. They teach vocab and sequencing, along with other needed standards.

Activities:

Social Studies-Give each child a fact about hamsters. Have them present their fact to the class anyway they would like to – draw a picture, make a video, tell a story. (done individually) <http://www.geocities.com/dustywug/Facts-Abouts-Hamsters.html>

Math – To be done in groups of 3 or 4. Give the group a total amount of money they can spend to get everything they need to set up their new pet hamster. Have them go to the following website to decide what to spend - <http://www.hamsters.co.uk/>. The group that comes the closest to their budget and purchases the necessary supplies wins.

Discussion questions for each chapter:

1. Pre – Have you ever had a teacher leave in the middle of the year? What did you think of the sub?  
During – page 6 Why was Humphrey so afraid of the new teacher, Ms. Mac?  
Post – Why did Humphrey not like Mrs. Brisbane? Would you have liked her if you were Humphrey?
2. Pre – Have you ever heard a scary noise when you were alone? What happened?  
During – page 11 What did Mrs. Mac do when she left the classroom that scared Humphrey?  
Post – Why did Humphrey like Aldo and think of him as a friend?
3. Pre – Do you remember making a new friend? How did that make you feel?  
During – page 20 What did Ms. Brisbane yell at Humphrey?  
Post – Why would Humphrey be scared if the custodian said goodbye and that he wasn't coming back until next week?
4. Pre – Think back to your last class? Did you work well together? Any trouble?  
During – page 27-29 How did the principal feel about Humphrey?

- Post – What lesson did Mr. Morales want to teach his children and why?
5. Pre – Have you ever had a pet and lost it? How did you find it?  
During – page 37 How many children were interested in taking Humphrey home?  
Post – What do you think Humphrey is up to for Aldo?
  6. Pre – Has your pet ever done something you thought was really smart? Explain.  
During – pages 48-49 What mean things did Garth say to Humphrey?  
Post - What would be your favorite pet to take home and care for?
  7. Pre – Have you ever spent time with people that speak a different language? Was it difficult?  
During – pages 52-53 How did Humphrey get Sayeh’s family to practice English?  
Post – Do you have a hidden talent like Sayeh and her singing?
  8. Pre – What was the favorite Halloween costume you remember wearing?  
During – page 59 – What did Ms. Brisbane wear?  
Post – Predict what will happen next for Aldo?
  9. Pre – Has a pet of yours ever been hurt? Explain.  
During – pages 73-75 How did Humphrey get Clem to leave the room?  
Post – Why do you think Miranda knows the Humphrey had something to do with Clem hiding?
  10. Pre- Are you a cat lover or a dog lover? Why?  
During – page 80 How does Garth explain his grades falling and his bad behavior to Mrs. Brisbane?  
Post - Do you think Mrs. Brisbane does not like Humphrey? Why?
  11. Pre – Do you watch television? How much?  
During – page 86 What was the situation with the tv’s in A.J.’s home?  
Post – How did Humphrey help fix the situation with the televisions in A.J.’s home?
  12. Pre – What activities happen at your home on Thanksgiving?  
During – page 100 Why did no one want to take Humphrey home?  
Post – Do you think it will be good or bad for Humphrey to be at the teachers home for the holiday?
  13. Pre – Do you think Humphrey wanted to go home with Mrs. Brisbane?  
During – page 106 What happened to Mr. Brisbane?  
Post – Predict what will happen to Humphrey while he stays at the Brisbane’s.
  14. Pre – What are some of your Thanksgiving traditions?  
During – page 109 What is Humphrey trying to do for Mr. Brisbane?  
Post – Would your teacher take home the class pet over holidays?
  15. Pre – What is your favorite part of winter?  
During – page 117 What did Humphrey get for Christmas?  
Post – What are some of the major lessons Humphrey learned?

#### Language – Vocabulary

**pagota** – page 3 A pagota is a large building that provides shelter. Humphrey said he was looking at a 3 story pagota to live in, but a nice cage would be enough for him.

**nocturnal** – page 9 Hamsters are nocturnal, meaning they sleep most of the day and are p most of the night.

**shriek** – page 29 to make a high pitch scream or yell. Mr. Morales two little children came into the room as soon as Humphrey got to the house and they started shrieking and squealing.

**murmur** - page 56 to whisper something softly so others do not hear you. Garth murmured to Humphrey that he was a scaredy cat

**tattered**- page 63 shredded material or material with holes and rips running through it. Humphrey was in the classroom with tattered skeletons

**blissfully** – page 89 to be in a state of happiness The sound in the house was calm and blissful due to the fact that the tv’s had been turned off.

**bombarded** – page 87 to be hit with a continual string of sights or sounds Humphrey could not sleep because lights and sounds keep waking and keeping him up.

**sealed** – page 101 to be finalized..a decision on who Humphrey would go home with was finally decided or sealed.

**stubble**- page 117 little hairs on a man’s face that appear at the end of the day or after not shaving for a day or so. Mr. Brisbane did not have stubble on his face when he appeared as Santa Claus.

Indiana Academic Standards:

Language Arts: 3.1.3, 3.1.6, 3.1.9, 3.2.3, 3.2.8, 3.3.4, 3.3.6, 3.4.3, 3.4.9, 3.4.4, 3.4.5, 3.4.7, 3.5.7

Science of social studies standards were met with the book.

Math – 3.6.6 and 3.6.7 were met in the above activity when the children would determine how much it cost to get the needed supplies for the hamster.

Bibliography:

bettybirney.com

Literary Terms

[bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/classroomresources.cfm](http://bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/classroomresources.cfm)

<http://www.picadome.fcps.net/lab/currl/animal/default.htm#Online%20Activities>

<http://doe.state.in.us/standards/welcome.html>

<http://www.learninghaven.com/la/>

<http://www.edhelper.com/language/language.html>

<http://gamequarium.com/languagearts.htm>