

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY

### Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 3-5

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**The World According to Humphrey** by Betty G. Birney. Penguin Group, 2004. 144 p.

#### Summary

Ms. Mac, the temporary teacher for Room 26, bought a hamster named Humphrey as a class pet. Humphrey is a very unusual hamster: He responds to humans with squeaks; he reads and writes along with the class; and he knows how to defend himself from larger animals. He is a very loving hamster and helps the children and their families with their problems. Humphrey tells about his experiences in the classroom and his weekend adventures when he visits the homes of his classmates. When Ms. Mac leaves for a teaching position in Brazil, Mrs. Brisbane the regular teacher returns to Room 26. Mrs. Brisbane does not like Humphrey at first, but Humphrey eventually wins her over. Some special features of the book are tips on how to care for hamsters, word puzzles, a trivia test, a maze and a set of questions and answers about the book.

#### Author's Biography

Betty G. Birney thinks of writing books as her first love; she wrote her first book at age seven. She attended school in Affton, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis from kindergarten to high school graduation. She went on to graduate with a degree in English from Webster College (now Webster University) in Webster Groves, Missouri. She has worked in advertising in St. Louis, Chicago and Southern California for Disneyland. She also worked in a Disney studio, writing and producing television programs and radio commercials. She was the writer and story editor of Disney Channel's *Welcome to Pooh Corner* and has written 200 episodes of animated television programs. She also writes cartoons, including "Berenstain Bears on Their Own." She won a Writer's Guild of America Award; three Humanities Prizes; and a Daytime Emmy Award for *Madeline*. Birney has written numerous children books and some middle school novels.

#### Other Titles by Betty Birney

*Friendship According to Humphrey*  
*The Seven Wonders of Sassafrass Springs*  
*Tyrannosaurus Rex*  
*Pie's in the Oven*

#### Related Titles

*The Care and Keeping of Friends* by Nadine Bernard Westcott.  
*Freddy the Golden Hamster* (Series) by Dietlof Reiche.  
*Hamsters to the Rescue* by Ellen Stoll Walsh.  
*The Mouse and the Motorcycle* by Beverly Cleary.  
*My Pet Hamster* by Anne Rockwell.  
*Stuart Little* by E. B. White.  
*Tales of Olga da Polga* by Michael Bond.  
*Wanted...Mud Blossom* by Betsy Byars.

## **Classroom Connections**

See the **Teacher's Guide** on Birney's Site for in-depth discussion questions.

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

### **Geography**

- Locate Brazil on a map. Have children research information about Brazil: language, flag, animals that live there, climate and the crops that are grown there. Have children draw a map of Brazil or give them an outline map and they can draw some of the animals that live there and the food that grows there.
- Have children research the following topics: the rain forest, Iguacu Falls, Rio de Janeiro, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Amazon River, Brasilia and locate them on an outline map of Brazil. A printable outline map of Brazil can be found on this site: <http://www.proteacher.com/090067.shtml>
- Students can play a game that children in Brazil play. Two games can be found in the teachers guide <http://www.bettybirney.com/WorldTeachersGuide.html>

### **Music**

- Since Ms. Mac played the bongo drums, have the students do research about bongo drums and make their own. Invite someone to play bongo drums.
- Mrs. Brisbane plays the piano. Have the students research the piano.

### **Science: Hamsters**

- Have students do research about hamsters (and perhaps other small rodents). Discuss the proper care of hamsters.

### **Health/Nutrition**

- As a culminating activity, children can snack on food, such as Brazilian nuts or fruit since it is served with every meal in Brazil. Since hamsters love sunflower seeds, provide some shelled sunflower seeds for the children to eat.

### **Language Arts**

- Students can discuss or write the answers to the questions in the back of the book.

### **Art**

- Have the students use their imaginations to draw pictures of things that Humphrey describes throughout the book.

### **Social Studies**

- Humphrey is a good friend. Have the class discuss friendship.
- Read the book *The Care and Keeping of Friends* by Nadine Bernard Westcott.
- See the site: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/BeingFriends.html>

## **Web Links**

### **Book and Author**

#### **Betty G. Birney**

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

The author's site includes a detailed biography and information about her other books. By clicking on *The World According to Humphrey* link in the "My Books" section, you can read reviews, a character lists, a reading guide, an excerpt from the book and jokes by Humphrey. A maze, a crossword puzzle, a word search and a reading quiz are also available.

The Teacher's Guide <http://www.bettybirney.com/WorldTeachersGuide.html> has ideas for multi-disciplinary activities: writing, creative writing, art, music, social studies, geography and opportunities for students to conduct research using the Internet and/or encyclopedia.

#### **Cynsations - Author Interview: Betty G. Birney on World According to Humphrey**

<http://cynthialeitichsmith.blogspot.com/2005/08/author-interview-betty-g-birney-on.html>

The site presents an interview with Betty Birney about the book and her life.

#### **Nancy Keane's Booktalks**

[http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/birney\\_world.htm](http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/birney_world.htm)

Two booktalks about the book.

### **Friendship**

#### **Teaching Guide: Being Friends**

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/BeingFriends.html>

"How to be a Good Friend" includes the characteristics of a good friend, discussion questions, group assignments and writing assignments.

### **Hamsters**

#### **Hamster Dance**

[www.hamsterdance.com](http://www.hamsterdance.com)

Cute musical animation.

#### **Pet Web Site: Hamsters**

[www.petwebsite.com/hamsters.asp](http://www.petwebsite.com/hamsters.asp)

Good information about various types of hamsters with lots of good photographs.

### **Brazil**

#### **ProTeacher: South America Lesson Plans**

<http://proteacher.com/090067.shtml>

South America lesson plan includes reproducible outline maps of Brazil and South America and a reproducible flag of Brazil.