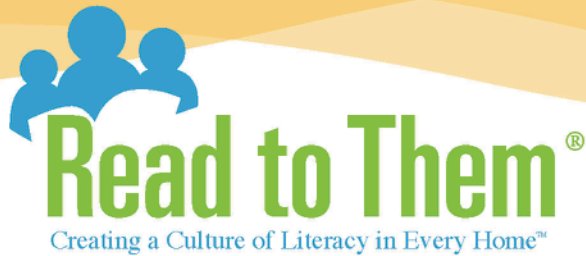


Suggested Activities for
***The World According to Humphrey* (2004)**
by Betty G. Birney

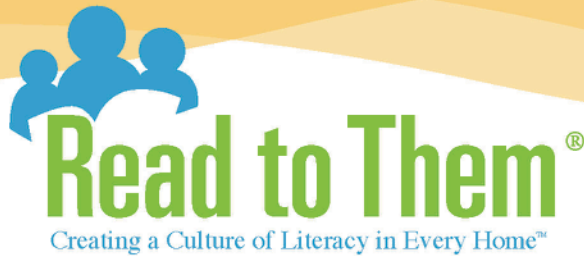
1. **Classroom Pets** – Some of your classrooms may already have a classroom pet. Many will want one after reading *The World According to Humphrey*. The key, though, is to use Humphrey’s example and see what lessons can be learned in each classroom via the classroom pet. Teachers might think carefully about how they share the responsibility of caring for the classroom pet. Obviously students will want to learn more about the habits and care of the classroom pet, but beyond that, teachers may even be able to find sly ways to use the classroom pet like Humphrey. Disciplinary situations or negotiations between students may take on a different tinge if a teacher can ask a question like, “What would Humphrey (or substitute class pet) say or think about this situation?” (e.g. what somebody said or did or wants)
2. **Humphrey’s Lessons** – Humphrey is full of wisdom and shares it freely with the reader in this story. It may be possible to get students to extrapolate and apply the logic of Humphrey’s lessons. One could ask them to think of somebody they know – in the classroom or school or at home – who could use a Humphrey lesson. Then, ask them to come up with suggestions. How would Humphrey help them? Students could write about their suggested lessons, too, imagining how they might play out.
3. **“You could learn a lot about yourself by getting to know another species.”** – That, of course, is Ms. Mac’s memorable admonition to the class. Students will very likely be curious to: a) learn about other species and b) tell everyone about what lessons they have learned such as how to treat them, about how humans treat them, and what humans can learn from treating them differently.
4. **Building Mazes** – Elementary school students often go through phases when a given class is into making mazes on graph paper – or even designing obstacle courses outside to race themselves, but what about following the lead of Mr. Brisbane and making hamster mazes? This could be a great class project – or just stimulating for interested students. Students and parents could also create items of interest from the story to be shared with others.



5. **Keep a Journal** – Humphrey keeps a journal of things that happen to him each day. Have the students keep a journal based on ideas that come up through the book: imagine a pet store, classroom, or strange home from Humphrey’s point of view, create an ad for something fun for Aldo to do over the weekend, write a return postcard from Humphrey back to Ms. Mac, etc.

6. **Tips** – At the end of each chapter is a “tip” from the *Guide to the Care and Feeding of Hamsters* by Dr. Harvey H. Hammer. Write a “Guide to the Care and Feeding of a _____ Grader”, either individually, or as a class. This could be a one-time project, or a daily activity, playing off the hamster care tip at the end of each chapter.
 - Chapter 1 – Write about your fantasy home.
 - Chapter 2 – What are your favorite (and not-so-favorite) foods?
 - Chapter 3 – What is your favorite part of the day?
 - Chapter 4 – How do you like to be treated, so you will not squeal or mutter or run away?
 - Chapter 5 – You could always lure me back with _____.
 - Chapter 6 – If you could have anyone at all take care of you, who would it be?
 - Chapter 7 – What do you do when intimidated or scared to make yourself feel better?
 - Chapter 8 – During what time of day are you most active? What are you doing?
 - Chapter 9 – I do not enjoy contact with _____.
 - Chapter 10 – I am incredible at _____.
 - Chapter 11 – Where would you go if you could “disappear” for a short while?
 - Chapter 12 – Who in your life do you know and trust?
 - Chapter 13 – I am curious about _____.
 - Chapter 14 – Where do you like to run and play?
 - Chapter 15 – How can you make a big difference?

As you can see, some of these will prompt a fairly factual answer (especially early on), but then later on, Humphrey will encourage some deeper thinking, delving into hopes, fears, fantasies, and self-exploration. If teachers engage in this activity as well, this can be a good opportunity for students to learn more about their teacher in a personable way.



7. **Triple Your Fun** – Humphrey says a word three times over for emphasis. Sometimes he describes his surroundings: LOUD-LOUD-LOUD or DARK-DARK-DARK. Sometimes he is trying to be understood: PLEASE-PLEASE-PLEASE or ME-ME-ME. Many times he is expressing his emotions: WHEW-WHEW-WHEW or SIGH-SIGH-SIGH or JOY-JOY-JOY. Make like Humphrey and make your point using triples. Find fun ways to weave this into your day. The morning announcements could include daily weather that is WARM-WARM-WARM. The cafeteria could serve burgers on whole wheat BUNS-BUNS-BUNS. The P.E. lesson for the day could include JUMP-JUMP-JUMP.
8. **Humphrey's Academics** – The goal of this program doesn't involve making actual schoolwork, but it might be possible to challenge students to meet Humphrey's standards. Start with the states and their capitals, and then go from there...
9. **Try Some Humphrey Snacks** – Bring in some foods that Humphrey would eat – cheese, fruit, raw veggies, etc. Most of these foods are found on a typical party snack tray. The kids can have fun trying to eat them like Humphrey would, and they'll be eating some healthy foods too!
10. **Reenact a Funny Scene** – *The World According to Humphrey* is filled with scenes that would be funny to act out with the students. Recreate a scene the way students envisioned it in their heads as they listened to the story. (i.e. – How does Humphrey travel across the classroom or through people's homes?)
11. **Become an Architect** – When Ms. Mac gets Humphrey at the Pet-O-Rama, she picks out a "respectable cage", even though he has had his eye on a fancier one. Design a "three story pagoda" for Humphrey. Don't forget spaces for eating, grooming, sleeping, exercising, and writing in his notebook.
12. **Name Yourself** – Humphrey has nicknames for all of the students in Room 26. What do you think your nickname would be? How would Humphrey know you? How would you like to be known?
13. **Travel Agent** – It's tough for a little hamster to get around. Pick two spots in your classroom, far away from each other. Ask students to brainstorm how Humphrey could make the journey there and back.