

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY

Teacher's Guide

Since Humphrey spends most of his time in Room 26, his experiences translate easily into your classroom as well. This guide provides a wide range of activities to share with your class (or smaller reading groups). In addition to discussion questions, there are multi-disciplinary activities: writing, creative writing, art, music, social studies, geography and opportunities for students to conduct research using the internet and/or encyclopedia.

HUMPHREY

Why does Humphrey see the world from a different point-of-view than the other students in Room 26?

How would a hamster's view of your classroom be different than yours?

What do you think Humphrey would think of your classroom? Do you think he'd enjoy it? Why?

Why does Humphrey think the students' names are Speak-Up-Sayeh, Stop-Giggling-Gail or Wait-for-the-Bell-Garth? What do you think Humphrey would think your name is, based on your habits?

WRITE ON: Humphrey is puzzled when he first hears that Halloween is approaching. If you were an alien, just arriving from another planet, on Halloween, what do you think you would think about the holiday? Write a description of this unique experience.

ART SMART: Mr. Brisbane built an elaborate addition for Humphrey's cage. Draw a picture of the inside of Humphrey's cage the way you think he'd like it to be. (Don't forget the lock-that-doesn't-lock.)

MS. MAC

Ms. Mac tells Humphrey, "You can learn a lot about yourself by taking care of another species." What do you think she meant by this statement?

What lessons have you learned by taking care of your own pet, someone else's pet or a classroom pet?

What lessons do you think you have taught your pet or other animal?

Often, the students, Mrs. Brisbane and especially Aldo, seem to understand what Humphrey says.

Do you talk to your pets or other animals? How do you talk to them? What do you imagine pets say back to you? How do they tell you that they're happy or unhappy?

WRITE ON: Imagine or write out a conversation you might have with a pet or other animal if that animal could talk.

FIND OUT MORE: Humphrey tells us Ms. Mac sometimes played the bongo drums. Look up bongo drums in the dictionary, encyclopedia or on the internet. What do they look like? How are they played? In what countries are bongo drums popular?

MAKE MUSIC: Stretch and fasten sturdy cloth or paper on top of a large, round, cardboard container such as an oatmeal box OR a large coffee can and start playing your own bongo drum.

MR. MORALES

Mr. Morales is the principal of Longfellow School, and the first person to take Humphrey home for the weekend. Humphrey calls him "The Most Important Person at Longfellow School."

Describe the job of a school principal. Why does a school need a principal? What would a typical day in the life of a

principal be like?

If you were principal of your school for one day, what would you do? Interview your principal to find out what his or her favorite or least favorite parts of the day are. Ask the other people who work in your school the same questions. Compile the answers into a book.

MAKE A LIST: Humphrey helps Mr. Morales, Willy and Brenda by escaping his cage. They lure him back in with a trail of sunflowers. Name five other ways you could get an escaped hamster back in his cage.

ART SMART: Imagine that Humphrey escapes from his cage in your room at home or your classroom. Draw a map or maze of the route Humphrey takes before going back to his cage.

SAYEH

Why is Speak-Up-Sayeh shy about talking in class, even though she always knows the right answer?

If English is your first language, describe how you would communicate if you suddenly found yourself in a place where no one spoke your language.

If English is your second language, describe how you felt when you first moved to a country where you didn't know the language. How did you communicate?

FIND OUT MORE: Learn how to say, "Hello, my name is ..." in five different languages. *Hint: You can use the internet, find foreign language dictionaries, or ask people you know who speak other languages.*

ART SMART: Make a poster that includes the word "Welcome" or "Hello" in as many languages as you can.

ALDO

Aldo, the Longfellow School custodian, visits Room 26 at night when the students and the teacher are gone.

Think about what your classroom is like at night when no one is there. If you were spending the night in your classroom, what would it be like? Describe the sights, the lighting, the sounds, the smells you might notice. How do you think you would feel? Would you see and hear things that you didn't normally see and hear during the day? *WRITE ON:* Write a one-page story about your night alone in the classroom.

Do you think your school custodian has an easy or hard time cleaning up your classroom. Why? What does your classroom look like at the end of each day? The next morning? How could you make your school custodian's job easier?

Aldo feels lonely because he works at night and has his free time during the day, while his friends have opposite schedules. Imagine what it would be like if you went to school at night and had the day free for other activities. *Make a schedule* for how you would spend your day – and your night – including when you'd go to bed, when you'd get up, how you'd spend your recess as well as classroom time and what you would do during the day when you had no school. When would you eat breakfast? When would you eat dinner? Do you think you'd like this schedule?

FIND OUT MORE: Do you know people who work at night? What are their schedules like? When do they get up? When do they eat breakfast? When do they go to bed?

JUST FOR FUN: What trick does Aldo perform for Humphrey? Do you have any tricks you can perform? Can you rub your stomach and pat yourself on the head at the same time? Touch your nose with your tongue? Juggle?

MIRANDA AND CLEM

Miranda Golden is "almost perfect," but her dog, Clem, is definitely not – at least in Humphrey's eyes.

What was Humphrey afraid Clem might do to him if the shooting rubber band hadn't scared him away? If that hadn't worked, how else could Humphrey have protected himself in Miranda's room?

WRITE ON: Have you ever known a pet that was annoying? Have you ever wanted to get away from someone else's pet? Describe how that animal irritated you and what you did about it.

What other pets might Humphrey be afraid of? What other pets might be afraid of Humphrey? What pets might like to play with and get to know Humphrey?

A.J.

When Humphrey visits the Thomas family's house, he finds out why A.J. is called Lower-Your-Voice-A.J.: the T.V. is always on and the volume is always turned up high. Humphrey helps the family learn that you can have a lot of fun if you turn off the television.

Why don't A.J.'s parents plug the television back in once they discover what Humphrey has done?

Do you think you and your family watch too much T.V.? Are some T.V. shows good for you? What can you learn from television?

FIND OUT MORE: how much television do you watch? For a week, keep a log of each T.V. show you watch each day and add up the hours.

WRITE ON: Discuss your favorite T.V. show: why do you like it? What do you learn from it?

What show do you watch (or did you watch last night), that you could have skipped? Why?

FIND OUT MORE: Take a poll of your class. What is each student's favorite T.V. show? Make a list of the favorites in order of their popularity.

MAKE A LIST: Name five fun things you like to do besides watching television.

MR. AND MRS. BRISBANE

Why doesn't Mrs. Brisbane like Humphrey when she first returns to Room 26? Find passages in the book that show that she's not happy to have Humphrey as a classroom pet.

What do we learn about Mrs. Brisbane's life that explains why she isn't welcoming to Humphrey?

Humphrey figures out early on that Mrs. Brisbane is a good teacher, in spite of the fact that she doesn't like him. Find three examples in the story where Mrs. Brisbane demonstrates that she cares about her students.

Why does Bert Brisbane act so grumpy when we first meet him?

What does Humphrey do to help Bert? How does Bert change? Give examples from the book that show that Bert has changed.

WRITE ON: Have you ever treated someone badly when you were upset about something else? Describe what happened and how you made up.



JOURNEY TO BRAZIL

Ms. Mac leaves Room 26 to teach in Brazil. She writes to the class and Humphrey several times. Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world in land size. The world's largest river, the Amazon, runs through Brazil.

FIND OUT MORE: Locate Brazil on a map. What continent is it on?

FIND OUT MORE: What language do they speak in Brazil? Why do they speak that language? How would you say "Hello," "Goodbye" and "Thank you" if you were in Brazil?

ART SMART: Draw a map of Brazil. Draw some of the animals that live there and the food that grows there.

FIND OUT MORE: Ms. Mac sent a picture of herself with some strange animals called *coatis*. What is a *coati* (sometimes called a *coatimundi*) and what does it look like? Find a picture in a book or on the internet. What animal does it remind you of?

FIND OUT MORE: Also, Ms. Mac sends a postcard with parrots and lush tropical foliage. What is the climate like in Brazil?

FIND OUT MORE: Brazil has a very interesting flag. Using the internet or the encyclopedia, find out what this flag symbolizes.

FIND OUT MORE: Some other facts about Brazil to research: the rain forest, Iguacu Falls, Rio de Janeiro, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Amazon River, Brasilia, *carnaval*.

JUST FOR FUN: In [Brazil](#), children play a game called "Hit It Off." Players put a stick into the ground and place a coin on top of the stick. They try to knock the coin off the stick by throwing pebbles at the coin. Points are awarded according to which coin falls farthest from the stick.

JUST FOR FUN: Here's a noisy, fun balloon game kids play in Brazil during carnival. The more people who play, the better. First, remove your shoes and tie an inflated balloon around your left ankle. Find a partner. Then, try to burst your partner's balloon by stamping on it with your left foot, while keeping your own balloon from popping. When a player's balloon is burst, he is out of the game. The partner must find another player to link up with. The last player remaining with an intact balloon wins.