

SCRAMBLED IMAGINATION



Can you unscramble these words that show up in *Imagination According to Humphrey*?

GAMATINOINI

ILNDAS

ARDNOG

OHURTA

YSROT

DEAMR

SHOUE

ZARBLIDZ

NIRAB

SQUEAK!!! Don't Peek!

ANSWERS:

IMAGINATION

ISLAND

DRAGON

AUTHOR

STORY

DREAM

HOUSE

BLIZZARD

BRAIN

START YOUR STORY NOW



Betty G. Birney says she often has the title for a book in her head before she has the story. While this is not true for all writers, thinking up the title can be a good springboard to a story.

Here's a fun way to try and get started.

- 1) Dream up a title – it can be as wacky or horrific as you want! What kind of book do you like to read? All writers are readers, so think about the kind of books you enjoy reading.
- 2) Write a one or two sentence description of the book. You don't have to know the story yet – just make it sound interesting enough that people would like to read it
- 3) Make a cover for the book that's aimed at attracting people to pick up the book and open it.

If you want to keep going:

- List the major characters and give a one or two sentence description of each
- Write short descriptions of key scenes
- Write the first paragraph, then the first page.
- If you really want to have fun, write the ending paragraph.
- Now that you know the characters, the beginning and the end ... all you have to do is figure out the middle. Don't be shy – you can rewrite this as many times as you need to.

It's only the beginning but you always have to start at the beginning so what are you waiting for?



WRITING STORIES: EVEN THE SKY IS NOT THE LIMIT

by Betty G. Birney



Who hasn't been nervous when sitting down to write a story? The key to success is to relax and let your imagination do the work. To me, the most exciting part of writing is the fact that you, the author, are totally in charge. You get to create the universe and everything that's in it. You get to make the rules and decide what happens to everyone in your world. In the end, you get to rule the universe – and that's powerful!

But getting started isn't always easy, as Humphrey finds in *Imagination According to Humphrey*. It would be nice to get a "brain blizzard" that gives you all the answers, but here are four simple but powerful tips to remember. They may seem obvious, but I forget them, too, sometimes.

- 1) Give your hero a problem to solve. Only he or she can solve it. If anybody else does, it weakens the story.
- 2) A story needs a clear beginning, middle and end. For me, the end is often the biggest hurdle, but in many books and movies, it's the middle that's the boring part, so make sure that doesn't happen.
- 3) Adding a ticking clock always helps. Whatever the hero must accomplish needs a deadline.
- 4) REVISE-REVISE-REVISE and then revise some more. That's what professional writers do.

Here are some suggestions for getting started.

In *Imagination According to Humphrey*, Mrs. Brisbane gives the students in Room 26 an assignment to finish this sentence,

"If I could fly, I would fly like a(n) _____."

When they complete the sentence, they write another sentence about where they would go.

Once the students finish the assignment, they continue to build a story, adding details and descriptive words. And while Humphrey finds writing his own story challenging, his hamster-iffic imagination finally comes through!

Try the assignment yourself:

If I could fly like a(n) _____, I would fly to _____.

Complete the story by saying what you would do there:

WRITING STORIES: EVEN THE SKY IS NOT THE LIMIT



In the books, Humphrey goes home with Felipe, whose brother has an imaginary friend named Bear. Have you ever had an imaginary friend? Even if you didn't, describe the perfect imaginary friend for you:

A large, empty rectangular box with a decorative teal border. The border consists of a series of small teal diamonds and dots connected by thin lines, creating a frame around the writing area.

In *Imagination According to Humphrey*, Mrs. Brisbane is reading a book about a young knight and flying dragons.

Write a short description imagining that YOU are coming face to face with a dragon. It can be scary or silly, serious or happy. You get to choose. That's what makes writing fun!

A large, empty rectangular box with a decorative teal border. The border consists of a series of small teal diamonds and dots connected by thin lines, creating a frame around the writing area.

WRITING STORIES: EVEN THE SKY IS NOT THE LIMIT



Part of the fun of the Humphrey books comes from seeing a character (in this case, a small hamster), suddenly living in a world he doesn't really understand. There are many "fish out of water" stories like this, from Mark Twain's classic, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to the movie, *E.T.* "Fish out of water" ideas provide a good way to get a story going. Try writing a paragraph or short story, looking at the world through someone else's eyes.

- A story about something in your life, seen through the eyes of your pet.
- A story about a kid in an adult's body and world OR a story about an adult in a kid's body and world.
- A story about switching places with your pet or even a wild animal.
- A story looking at the world through the eyes of a bully your teacher or an alien from another planet! How about a story looking at kids through the eyes of the owner of the local toy store or a new kid who just moved next door where he can see in your window and tries to imagine what you're doing.

