



Friendship According to Humphrey

by Betty Birney

Recommended Ages:

7-12

Summary: After the holidays, Humphrey is shocked by a big surprise in Room 26—a new class pet! Humphrey tries to be welcoming, but Og the frog doesn't seem to want to be friends. During class and the weekends at students' houses, Humphrey helps to resolve friendship problems between his classmates and learns that friendship can be tricky. But if any hamster can become buddies with a frog, it's Humphrey!

Discussion: Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Why does Humphrey feel jealous when Og appears in the classroom? What are other reasons that someone might be jealous of someone else? What might help someone get over those feelings of jealousy?
2. Humphrey feels that Og does not want to be friends. Why does he think that? Is it true?
3. Think about a time when you met a group of kids you didn't know (first day of school, sports practice, after-school program). How did you feel? How did other kids or grown-ups make you feel welcome? What could you do if you see someone in a similar situation?
4. The children who rode the bus with A.J. and Garth were all afraid of Martin Bean. If Humphrey had not helped them, what are three other things they could have done to deal with Martin's bad behavior? Why does Martin act the way he does? Which adult helps Martin learn to be friendlier? How does he do that?
5. Have you ever had an experience with a bully or seen someone else have one? How did you or the other person handle the situation?
6. Miranda's stepsister, Abby, seems mean when Humphrey first meets her, but by the end of his visit, she seems nice. Why was Abby crabby in the beginning? What changed the way she acted?
7. Humphrey becomes very upset when best friends Heidi and Gail stop speaking to one another. Have you and your best friend ever had a big argument? How did you feel? Were you able to make up and become friends again? What did you learn from that experience?

Activities:

- None of the students could think of a word to rhyme with “Humphrey,” but Mandy Payne realized that her name rhymed with “candy cane.” Try to find a word that rhymes with your first or last name.
- Kirk wrote a poem about a frog in which the first letter of each line spelled the word FROG. This is called an acrostic poem. Pick your favorite animal and write an acrostic poem.
- Taking care of a pet is a big responsibility, and different types of animals have different needs. Research an animal to find out more about their habitat, their life cycle, where the animal is found, and what you can do to take care of it as a pet.

Adapted from Penguin.