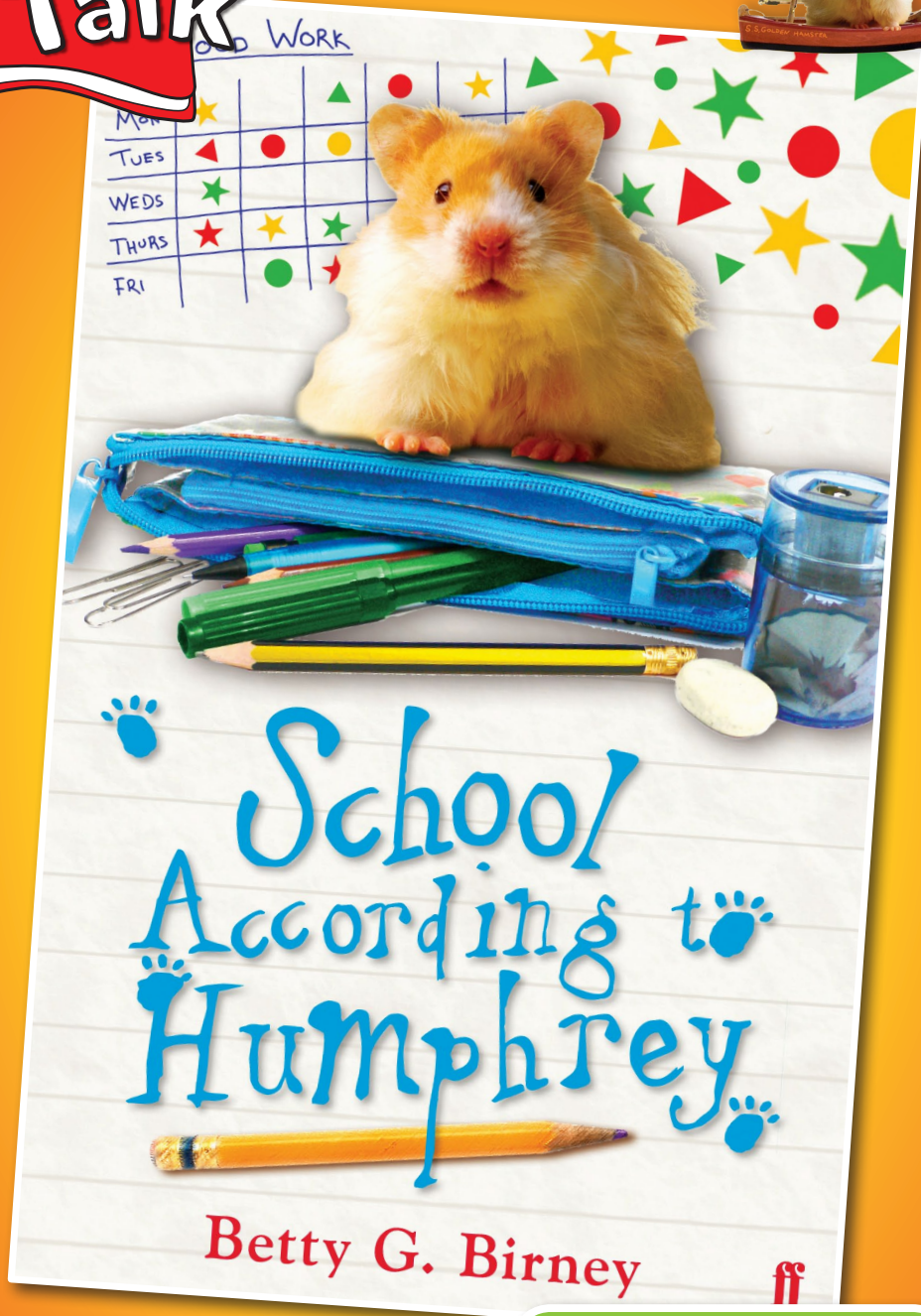




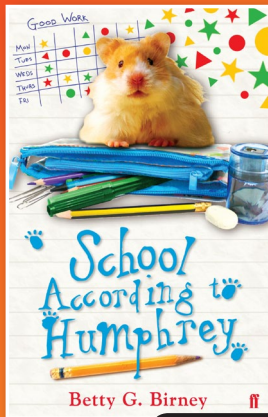
SCHOLASTIC

Book Talk



AGES 6+

Engage and inspire your pupils with a Book Talk!



Look out for me at  
your Book Fair!

AGES 6+

Price	£5.99
Case	Read Alone
Author	Betty G. Birney
Publisher	Faber

## Using this book in your classroom

### Themes

This delightfully funny book gives an insight into the life of a classroom hamster. Themes include **friendship**, **pet care** and **teamwork**.

### Summary

Humphrey might look like a normal pet hamster, but inside he is far from ordinary! His funny, wise and insightful comments on school life have already won him many fans. In his latest book, Humphrey has to deal with a big-big-big disappointment – he returns from an unsqueakably exciting summer holiday at Camp Happy Hollow, only to find that his old friends have moved on from Room 26 and a completely new group of students have taken their place! At first, he can hardly believe it, and he is keen to try and find his way back to his 'real' class. Slowly but surely, however, he realizes that far from being the worst class in the world, his new class is one of the very best!

As Humphrey watches and listens to his new classmates, he begins to realize that many of them have problems – Phoebe is forgetful, Kelsey is very clumsy, Harry is always late, and Tall Paul and Small Paul just do not get on... Ever helpful, Humphrey looks out for an opportunity to put things right. And, being a resourceful hamster, he soon finds just the opportunity he needs!

### Did you know?

- As a child, Betty Birney loved to roller-skate and play the piano (not both at once, though). She still loves to play the piano, but the thing she loves best is writing books.
- As well as her bestselling books about Humphrey, Betty Birney has also written over 200 episodes of many different children's TV programmes, including Disney's *Winnie the Pooh*.

## The Story Session

### 1. Introducing the book

- Have the children read any other books about Humphrey? If so, share their thoughts about him. If they haven't read any other Humphrey books, look together at the picture on the front cover and read the blurb. What kind of creature is Humphrey? Does he seem like a friendly hamster? What do the children think life would be like for a classroom pet hamster? Share the children's predictions about what might happen in this book.
- Read Chapter 1 (pages 1-8) out loud, pausing occasionally to ask the children for their reactions. At the end of the chapter, ask: "Why do you think Humphrey calls this 'the worst first day'? Do you think he's right that the new students are in the wrong room? What do you think has really happened?"

### 2. Reading the story

- Read to the end of Chapter 2 (pages 9-22). Ask: "What do we find out about the children in Mrs Brisbane's new class in this chapter? Do any of the children have problems? What do you think will happen in the rest of the story? Do you think Humphrey will try to get back to his old class, or will he end up liking the new students?"
- Encourage the children to read the rest of the story independently, or continue to read it to the class. Pause during the reading to talk about the story – for example, share any clues that the children can find about the new students and the difficulties they have. After Chapter 11, ask the children why they think Humphrey swapped the name cards around for Brisbane's Buddies. Do they think this was a good idea? Look out for clues later on in the story that let the reader know that Humphrey was right!
- At the end of the book, look at Humphrey's rules for classroom pets (page 169). Do the children think these are good rules? Does Humphrey live up to them?

### 3. Follow-up

- Ask the children to draw up their own list of rules for humans who look after classroom pets. They could base it on Humphrey's list on page 169, but think about what pets need and how to make sure they have a happy life.
- What do the children think Humphrey would think if he visited their classroom? What would he like about it? Is there anything he wouldn't like? They could write a letter or postcard to Humphrey, telling him about their class.
- The author, Betty Birney, has a fun website with lots of information and activities with a Humphrey theme: [www.bettybirney.com](http://www.bettybirney.com)

### YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us to [bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk](mailto:bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk)