

**TEACHERS' GUIDE**

# ***Memoirs of a Hamster***

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>**

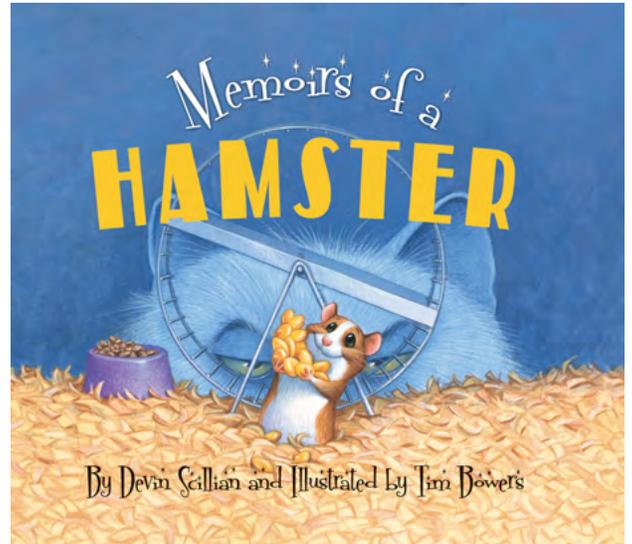


### SYNOPSIS

Night 1 / My life is perfect. / I have a bowl full of seeds, a cozy pile of wood shavings, and room to run. / I'm never leaving here. / Question: Who's the luckiest hamster in the world? / Answer: ME! Seymour the hamster has the perfect life. He has a spacious cage, a constant food supply, and a FuzzyBoy 360 exercise wheel that lets him run to his heart's content. Life could not be better. Or could it? When Pearl the cat tells Seymour of the goodies beyond the safe confines of his cage, he starts to think he's missing out. And out is the new in! It's only after Seymour is out of his cage that he begins to fully appreciate his safe and cozy home.

### THEMES IN THE STORY

- Friendship
- Truthfulness
- Appreciation
- Pets



Written by: Devin Scillian  
Illustrated by: Tim Bowers  
Published by: Sleeping Bear Press  
Read by: Melanie Lynskey  
Suggested grade level: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>

## ELA COMMON CORE STANDARD

**Reading Literature:** Students read and respond to works of literature with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

Standards listed below are for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, but can be adapted to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade standards.

## BEFORE VIEWING

**Standards:** *CCSS.SL.3.1*

**Objective:** Tap knowledge and build background to prepare for reading the story.

**Procedure:** Build background by discussing the following points with students:

- What do you know about hamsters? *Think, pair, and share.*
- What do you think would make a hamster happy? *Raise hands.*
- What are some things that would make you happy? *Think, pair, and share.*
- Do you know what the word memoir means? *Thumbs up, thumbs down, explain.*
- Look closely at the cover. What are some things that stand out? *Raise hands.*

## DURING VIEWING

**Reading Focus:** Ask and answer questions.

**Standards:** *CCSS.RL.3.1*

**Objective:** Students will listen to the story and answer questions.

**Procedure:** Stop story at specific times to ask questions or pose prompts from the suggested list below:

- Who do we meet right away?
- Why does he think his life is perfect and that he is the luckiest hamster in the world?
- Who is telling the story? How do you know?
- What gets put in Seymour's cage that he is very excited about?
- What does the word hydrated mean? Explain how you know.
- Who takes care of Seymour? How do you know she loves him?
- Why does he say "nasty" or "yuck" when she gives him a kiss?
- What new character do we meet? What animal is she and what's her name?
- "You run for miles every night, but you never leave that cage. What's it all for? What a complete waste of time. Have fun in your cage. I'm going to the sunroom." Who says this and why?

## DURING VIEWING – CONTINUED

- How do Pearl’s comments make Seymour feel? How would you feel?
- Do you think Seymour will want to leave his cage after he gets to see some of the house? Explain.
- What did Pearl lie to Seymour about? Why do you think she did this?
- Make a prediction — Who is Hoover?
- Why is Seymour having trouble sleeping and concentrating?
- What new character do we meet? What animal is he and what’s his name?
- What does Buck say that makes Seymour even more curious?
- What is Operation Tasty Treat?
- Explain the steps in Seymour’s escape plan.
- What does he mean when he says his plan “went like clockwork?”
- Who helped him get out? Why do you think she is helping him?
- Why does Seymour say that cats are big, fat liars?
- Why is Seymour in big trouble and how did Pearl trick him?
- What does Seymour do to occupy his time while he is hiding?
- How is he feeling? How would you feel?
- Give a word to describe Seymour as he tries to make an escape. Explain.
- What sounded like a hurricane and how did it cause trouble?
- What was everyone thinking during this moment?
- Who saved Seymour?
- Why did Seymour finally call the little girl’s kiss lovely, sweet, and beautiful, instead of saying “yuck” or “nasty?”
- Why did he kiss her back?
- How has Seymour changed?
- What lesson did he learn at the end of the story?

## AFTER VIEWING – OPTION 1

**Reading Focus:** Central Message

**Standards:** *CCSS.RL.3.2*

**Objective:** Students will use key details from the text to determine the central message.

**Materials:**

- Common Central Messages list (*page 9*)
- Determining the Central Message worksheet (*page 10*)
- Pencils

## AFTER VIEWING – OPTION 1 CONTINUED

### Procedure:

1. Review/discuss the meaning of ‘central message’ as a class.
2. The class will determine that the central message is the big idea, or the lesson that is learned.
3. The teacher and class can create a list of common central messages that can be learned in stories, or the teacher can provide the class with a copy of a **Common Central Messages** list.
4. After going through the list and brainstorming, students can work independently or in pairs to complete the **Determining the Central Message** worksheet for the story.
5. Students will provide key details to show how they determined the central message of the story.
6. The teacher can collect and review, or the class can share their idea out loud.

## AFTER VIEWING – OPTION 2

**Reading Focus:** Point of View/Perspective

**Standards:** *CCSS.RL.3.6*

**Objective:** Students will focus on the point of view of each character and determine if they agree or disagree with them.

### Materials:

- **Character Point of View** worksheet (*page 11*)
- Pencils

### Procedure:

1. The teacher will review the meaning of Point of View/Perspective with the class. Remind students that the point of view is who is telling the story, and the perspective is how each person or character may see or think about something, which can be different for everyone.
2. Students will work as a class to determine that the story is being told in first person point of view, because Seymour is a character in the story and he is telling the story. We are hearing the story through his perspective.
3. Next, determine who the remaining characters are, and discuss how they will have different perspectives on events that occur in the story. They are Pearl, Buck, and the little girl.
4. Then, ask the students to think about the situation in the story when Seymour is trying to sneak by Pearl to get back to his cage safely. This event involves all the characters, and there is a lot going on. Complete the **Character Point of View** worksheet with this in mind, and think about what each character must be thinking and feeling from their own perspective. Students can work on this independently, in pairs, or in small groups.

## AFTER VIEWING – OPTION 2 CONTINUED

5. After students have completed the step on what the characters were thinking, have them work independently to determine if they have the same perspective. Do they agree or disagree, and why?
6. The teacher can collect and review, or the students can share their thoughts out loud.

## READING RESPONSE

**Standards:** *CCSS.RL.3.1*

**Objective:** Students will answer the prompt using at least two details from text to support the response.

**Reading Prompt:** In the beginning of the story, Seymour thinks he has the perfect life and that he is the luckiest hamster in the world, but something changes that. Explain what changed his mind, using at least two details from the text.

## WRITING – NARRATIVE/MEMOIR

**Standards:** *CCSS.W.3.3*

**Objective:** Students will write a memoir, using grade appropriate sentence structure and spelling, to talk about personal events.

**Materials:**

- Memoirs worksheet (*page 12*)
- Pencils

**Procedure:**

1. Teacher will refer to the text to show examples of Seymour’s memoir and ask the children what a memoir is (*a collection of someone’s memories*).
2. Next, the teacher will provide an example by sharing a memory from their own life with the class.
3. The class will brainstorm ideas/personal events that they could write about. Examples: a vacation, the first week of school, getting a new pet, becoming a sibling, learning how to do something, etc.
4. Students will then be given a few pages of the **Memoirs** worksheet to begin their writing. Each day or night will get its own page.
5. Students can meet with peers to revise and edit, or they can conference with the teacher.
6. Pictures can be added once the final written draft is complete.
7. Pages can be stapled together to create a memoir book.
8. The class can share out loud, trade memoirs to read, or display for a literacy walk.

## SCIENCE – RESEARCH

**Objective:** Students will research information about how to take care of a pet of their choice.

**Materials:**

- Computers
- Non-fiction texts about animals
- **How to Care for a Pet** worksheet (*page 13*)
- Pencils

**Procedure:**

1. Explain to students that they will be picking a pet to research.
2. The teacher will use a hamster as an example for the class. They will refer to the text *Memoirs of a Hamster*, and also pull up information on the computer.
3. The teacher will then fill in information about what the hamster needs to survive on the **How to Care for a Pet** worksheet.
4. Next, the teacher will ask students for some other suggestions of animals that would make good pets, and create a list of options.
5. Students will then have the opportunity to select a pet from the list and begin their research.
6. Students will fill in their own **How to Care for a Pet** worksheet about their chosen pets.
7. Students may need more than one day to gather all their information and ideas.
8. After their research is complete, students can add a picture of their animal.
9. When students are ready, they can share with their class what they learned about their pet.
10. Display in room for all to see and admire!

## SOCIAL STUDIES/ART

**Objective:** Students will create their own perfect place to live, including both things they need and want.

**Materials:**

- Teacher-selected video of ‘Needs vs. Wants’
- **Needs vs. Wants** T-chart worksheet (*page 14*)
- Paper
- Various art supplies for coloring

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson by showing a teacher-selected video comparing needs vs. wants.

## SOCIAL STUDIES/ART – CONTINUED

2. The teacher will then refer to *Memoirs of a Hamster*, and, as a class, students will complete the **Needs vs. Wants** T-chart to determine the things that Seymour needed and the things that he wanted.
3. Next, the students will be given their own T-charts to complete. They must come up with five things that they need and five things that they want, in order to create the “perfect” place to live, just like Seymour had.
4. Students will then create a visual to represent their “perfect place to live”.
5. Display for all to see!

# **COMMON CENTRAL MESSAGES**

**Help others who are in need.**

**Do not brag.**

**Be honest.**

**Appreciate what you have.**

**When you work together, you can accomplish more.**

**Don't give up.**

**Always be prepared.**

**Don't trust strangers.**

**Don't be a bully.**

**Be patient.**

**Listen to your parents and teachers.**

**Follow the rules so you can stay safe.**

**Good friends stick together. Be loyal.**

**Treat others how you want to be treated.**

**Never give up.**

**Be brave. Try new things.**

**Accept others who are different.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# DETERMINING THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

To find the central message, think about what each key character says, does, or learns.

<p><b>Key Detail</b></p>	<p><b>Key Detail</b></p>	<p><b>Key Detail</b></p>
↓	↓	↓
<p><b>What is the Central Message?</b></p>		

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# CHARACTER POINT OF VIEW

Think about the different characters in *Memoirs of a Hamster*. What do they think when Seymour is trying to sneak back to his cage and Hoover turns on. What decisions do they make? What is important to them? Do you agree with them?

<b>Name of Character</b>	<b>What Does the Character Think?</b>	<b>What Do YOU Think?</b> (Do you agree or disagree?)
Seymour		
Pearl		
Buck		
The little girl		



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# HOW TO CARE FOR A PET

**My pet is a...**

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**My pet eats...**

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**I care for my pet by...**

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**To keep my pet healthy...**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# NEEDS

# WANTS

## **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This guide enhances the ELA curriculum by providing supplemental learning opportunities alongside quality children’s literature, engaging students as they listen to expressive read alouds.

Suggested story related activities in this guide are aligned with ELA Common Core Standards.