



THE FREDDY THE PIG SERIES

by Walter R. Brooks

illustrated by Kurt Wiese

Introduction

With the 1927 publication of **To and Again** (later re-titled **Freddy Goes to Florida**), Walter R. Brooks began a series that would ultimately stretch to twenty-six volumes and become a classic of 20th century American children's literature. Especially memorable for the richness of their characterizations, the books about the pig nonpareil and his many friends are also unforgettable celebrations of the value of friendship and the practical virtues of loyalty, steadfastness, kindness, and simply doing the right thing.

Always inventive in their plotting, satisfying in the authenticity of their rural and small town settings, filled with memorable phrases and homely wisdom, the Freddy books capture the same kind of American spirit as do the Homer Price books by Robert McCloskey, E.B. White's **Charlotte's Web**, and Robert Lawson's **Ben and Me** and **Rabbit Hill**. Like these other masters, Brooks never underestimated or wrote down to his readers. His respect for them is reflected in the richness of his language and the thoughtfulness of his themes. Most importantly, perhaps, his are among the very first enduringly significant humorous children's books of the 20th century. And they contain the best kind of humor, still fresh and relevant to today's readers; it arises naturally out of character and incongruity, is embellished with wonderfully inventive and witty word play, and is never mean or hurtful. It springs from both the mind AND the heart, a reason the Freddy books are universally beloved by readers of all ages. Another even more important reason is Freddy himself. Over the course of the series he plays many parts—detective, poet, journalist, politician, magician, cowboy, pilot, and more—but his most significant role is that of steadfast friend who, even though he's often so scared his tail comes completely uncurled, never fails to come to the rescue of those in distress. Freddy is a one-pig cavalry and one of the greatest characters in children's literature.

The Freddy Books

Freddy Goes to Florida (1927)

(originally titled **To and Again**)

Tired of the bitter winter weather in upstate New York, the animals of the Bean Farm decide to go on vacation to Florida. Along the way they meet the President, outwit a band of hungry alligators, encounter burglars, and discover buried treasure.

Freddy Goes to the North Pole (1930)

(originally titled **More To and Again**)

Inspired by the success of their Florida trip, the animals launch an expedition to the North Pole where they meet Santa Claus and "rescue" him from the bumbling efforts of a band of sailors who are determined to streamline his toy production.

Freddy the Detective (1932)

Freddy, who has been a major supporting character in the first two books, finally moves to center stage when, inspired by reading **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes**, he decides to become a detective. Of all the roles Freddy would play, the recurring one of detective is the most important and many people regard this as the best book in the series.

The Story of Freginald (1936)

Freginald is a young bear who runs away from home to join Mr. Boomschmidt's circus. Freddy doesn't make an appearance until the final third of the book when he helps the bear solve a baffling mystery and save the circus. This is the first book in the series in which the animals talk to human beings.

The Clockwork Twin (1937)

The animals rescue a boy named Adoniram from his villainous aunt and uncle. When they realize he is lonely, they persuade Mr. Bean's inventor uncle, Ben, to build the boy a friend out of wood, a clockwork twin. Freddy then assumes the role of detective to track down the boy's real-life lost brother, Byram.

Freddy the Politician (1939)

(originally titled **Wiggins for President**)

Anxious to prove themselves reliable, Freddy and his friends start a bank and form a government, the First Animal Republic. Simon and his family of rats, sworn enemies of Freddy since **Freddy the Detective**, try to turn the republic into a dictatorship but are foiled by the ingenious pig. This book is often compared to George Orwell's **Animal Farm**.

Freddy's Cousin Weedly (1940)

Freddy's best friend Jinx the cat adopts the pig's young cousin Weedly and tries to teach him courage and self-reliance. Some of the other animals think he succeeds too well! In the meantime, Freddy writes a play and foils an effort by Mr. Bean's Aunt Effie to steal a family heirloom.

Freddy the Ignormus (1941)

A mysterious something that calls itself the Ignormus moves into the haunted Big Woods and begins terrorizing the adjacent farm and extorting food from the animals by threatening to eat them until Freddy the detective comes to the rescue!

Freddy and the Perilous Adventure (1942)

Freddy and the ducks, Alice and Emma, go aloft in a hot air balloon. Blown off course, Freddy is accused of stealing the balloon and must go into hiding with the Boomschmidt Circus while his friends, led by Leo the lion, help clear his good name.

Freddy and the Bean Home News (1943)

Freddy starts the first animal newspaper, *The Bean Home News*, to the consternation of the wealthy Mrs. Underdunk and her evil brother, Herb Garble, owners of the rival human paper, *The Centerboro Guardian*.

Freddy and Mr. Camphor (1944)

Freddy takes a summer job as caretaker on the estate of the wealthy C. Jimson Camphor. Things get complicated when, first, the rats show up and then two villains from *Freddy Goes to Florida*, the evil Zebedee Winch and his dirty-faced son Horace, put in an appearance. Freddy is not too busy foiling their plots to take on a new role: he becomes an artist!

Freddy and the Popinjay (1945)

Freddy transforms the nearsighted robin J. J. Pomeroy into a popinjay, and a neighboring farm boy Jimmy Witherspoon from a pest into an ally. Things get complicated when a family of wildcats shows up on the farm.

Freddy the Pied Piper (1946)

Freddy must rescue his old friend Leo the lion who has been captured by a dishonest pet shop owner. But that's only the beginning of a page-turning adventure that will take the animals all the way to Virginia to save the Boomschmidt Circus from financial ruin.

Freddy the Magician (1947)

Freddy becomes an amateur magician, antagonizing Senor Zingo, a professional magician with the circus. Can Freddy best him in a grudge match performance and foil the man's efforts to defraud the Centerboro Hotel?

Freddy Goes Camping (1948)

Freddy, disguised as a camper, goes undercover to save the old hotel at Lakeside from an infestation of ghosts. But then the Bean Farm itself comes under attack by the rats and their ally in evil, the mysterious Mr. Eha.

Freddy Plays Football (1949)

Freddy goes back to school to become the star of the Centerboro High School football team but isn't too busy to foil a plot to defraud Mrs. Bean of her family inheritance.

Freddy the Cowboy (1950)

Freddy saves a horse named Cyclone from its abusive guest ranch owner, Cal Flint. When the man vows revenge, a group of rabbits calling themselves the Horrible Ten rally to Freddy's rescue.

Freddy Rides Again (1951)

When the wealthy, fox-hunting Margerine family buys a neighboring farm, Freddy disguises himself as a desperado named Snake Peters to save his friend, John the fox, and teach the Margerine's son, Billy, a lesson in humility-and humanity.

Freddy the Pilot (1952)

Freddy takes to the skies to save the Boomschmidt Circus from the machinations of the evil magazine (and comic book) publisher, Watson P. Condiment.

Freddy and the Space Ship (1953)

Uncle Ben builds a space ship and, with Freddy, Jinx, and others as crew members, blasts off for Mars. One misadventure follows another, as Charles the rooster is kidnapped and Freddy goes into disguise as the alien Captain Neptune.

The Collected Poems of Freddy the Pig (1953)

A highlight of each Freddy book is the inclusion of the talented pig's poetry, which is collected here in one volume and embellished with pictures by Kurt Wiese, whose illustrations for all the Freddy books are an important part of their enduring popularity.

Freddy and the Men from Mars (1954)

Freddy learns that Martians have landed on earth and joined Mr. Boomschmidt's circus. He begins to smell a rat, however, when he learns that the Martians' manager is his old enemy, Herb Garble.

Freddy and the Baseball Team from Mars (1955)

Still with the circus, the Martians form a baseball team. When one of them is kidnapped, Freddy goes into disguise as their coach, the elderly Mr. Arquebus, and quickly encounters an old adversary, Mr. Eha.

Freddy and Simon the Dictator (1956)

Simon the rat returns and, with the unlikely assistance of Jinx the cat, turns the Bean Farm from a republic to a dictatorship. Is Jinx a traitor? And will the rats succeed in conquering the nearby estate of Freddy's old friend, Mr. Camphor?

Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans (1957)

A gang of international spies descends on the Bean Farm, hoping to steal Uncle Ben's plans for a flying saucer. Through a comedy of errors, Freddy is branded a traitor and must go into hiding, disguised as a gypsy fortune-teller.

Freddy and the Dragon (1958)

When a crime wave strikes Centerboro, Freddy launches an investigation and-shades of Washington Irving-encounters a headless horseman! With the inventive help of Uncle Ben, Freddy cracks the case.

Curriculum Related Discussion Questions and Activities

Language Arts

Characterization

1. There are more than 250 characters, animal and human, in the Freddy books. List some of your favorites and discuss why you like them. Then, based on what you learn about them from your discussion and your reading of the books, write a brief biography or autobiography of each, imagining details as necessary.
2. There are a number of memorable villains in the Freddy books. List as many as you can and discuss what motivates them. How are they similar? How are they different? How many of them are animals? How many are humans? How does Freddy react to and deal with them?
3. Friendship is a recurring theme in the Freddy books. Who are Freddy's best friends? What does friendship mean to Freddy, and what are some of the ways he helps his animal and human friends?

Humor

1. Walter R. Brooks uses a number of devices to bring humor to his books. One of these is character exaggeration. For example, Charles the rooster loves to talk and give speeches. Can you think of other characters that are exaggerated for humorous effect? (Another example: Mr. Groper, the hotel manager, who has a weakness for big words or, as he puts it, "I'm habituated to this here sesquipedalianism.")
2. Mr. Camphor and his butler Bannister collect proverbs like "A rolling stone gathers no moss," argue about them and test them. What are some of their other proverbs? (See especially **Freddy and Mr. Camphor** and **Freddy Goes Camping**.) Discuss their meanings. What are some ways you could test them?
3. Brooks often uses a device of humor called "incongruity," in which characters or events are paired in surprising and unlikely ways; for example, Freddy (a pig) rides a bicycle; Leo (a lion) enjoys going to the beauty parlor to get a permanent wave for his mane. Can you find other examples of incongruity? What makes them funny?

4. Brooks enjoys word play and his books are filled with funny names. Make a list of them and discuss why they're funny. He also enjoys making up humorous expressions: Leo, for example, says things like "Well, dye my hair" and "Well, paint my toenails shell pink." Make a list of some of these, discuss why they're funny, and then create some of your own for individual characters.

Poetry

1. Freddy is an accomplished poet. Pretend you're Freddy and write a poem about how it feels to be a pig.
2. Some of Freddy's poems are parodies of famous poems and songs. Some examples are "The old hotel at Lakeside," a parody of Rudyard Kipling's "Road to Mandalay" (in **Freddy Goes Camping**) and "The Midnight Ride of Hank the Horse," a parody of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" (in **Freddy and the Bean Home News**). Read both the originals and the parodies and discuss how Freddy has changed the original language and subject to suit his own poetic purposes.

Drama

1. Freddy writes a play in **Freddy's Cousin Weedly**. Stage a classroom production of this play or write an original play about the Freddy characters (or you might want to adapt scenes from one of your favorite books).
2. Make puppets of the Freddy characters and stage a puppet theater production.

Journalism

1. Freddy is a newspaper editor. Imagine that he has hired you as a reporter for The Bean Home News, and has asked you to write a news report of one of the incidents in the Freddy books (for example: the return of the animals from their Florida vacation; the trial of Jinx the cat in **Freddy the Detective**; the election fraud in **Freddy the Politician**).
2. Write an editorial for The Bean Home News (some possible subjects: the use of "ringers" by the Tushville football team (see **Freddy Plays Football**); why Centerboro residents should re-elect Sheriff Higgins (see **Freddy and the Bean Home News**); why people shouldn't eat meat (especially bacon and ham!).
3. For the sports page, write an account of one of the football games from **Freddy Plays Football** or one of the baseball games from **Freddy and the Baseball Team from Mars**.

Social Studies

1. Politics and government provide the subjects of several of the Freddy books, notably **Freddy the Politician** and **Freddy and Simon the Dictator**. In them, Brooks explores the differences between two forms of government, the republic and the dictatorship. How does he define these? Discuss the differences between the two forms of government in terms of what happens on the Bean Farm.
2. **Freddy the Politician** is often compared with George Orwell's **Animal Farm**. How do you think the two books are similar? How are they different? Which book do you like better and why?
3. Brooks enjoys poking fun at authority figures like politicians, military officers, wealthy people, and even school principals (Mr. Gridley in **Freddy Plays Football**). What techniques does he use to make readers laugh at these characters? Is he fair?
4. Many of the Freddy books involve travel. Draw a map of some of the animals' journeys or, based on what you have learned about the Bean Farm and the nearby village of Centerboro, draw a map of "Freddy country."

Science and Technology

1. The Freddy books take place on a farm. What does the reader learn from them about farm life? Is this life treated realistically?
2. Many of the most memorable characters in the Freddy books are animals. How true to their animal selves are they and how are they like humans? Does Brooks make them too human to be believable as animals?
3. The animals in the Freddy books talk to humans. Why can't animals in the real world talk? If the animals you know could talk, however, what do you think they would say? Write an imagined conversation with one of them.
4. How does Brooks feel about modern technology and inventions (think about Mr. Bean's attitude toward cars, for example). Make a list of Uncle Ben's inventions (see especially **The Clockwork Twin**, **Freddy the Pilot**, and **Freddy and the Space Ship**). How many of them are practical? How many even function? Make a working drawing of one of his inventions or build a model.
5. Uncle Ben builds a space ship in **Freddy and the Space Ship** and draws plans for a flying saucer in **Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans**. How much do you think Brooks, writing in the 1950's, knew about interplanetary travel? What mistakes does he make?
6. If you were writing **Freddy and the Men from Mars**, what kind of Martians would you create? Would they resemble Brooks's? Write an article about the planet Mars and our attempts to explore it.

About the Author and Illustrator

About the Author

Walter R. Brooks was born on January 9, 1886, in Rome, New York. His father, William, was a music teacher and his mother, Fanny, was the daughter of Samuel Barron Stevens, a prominent banker and two-term mayor of Rome. Walter attended the University of Rochester and then studied medicine at New York's Homeopathic Medical College but left before graduating to begin a career in advertising, working for the American Red Cross as a publicist and copywriter. Moving to New York's Greenwich Village in 1919, he continued to work for the American Red Cross until 1927, the year the first Freddy book, **To and Again** (later retitled **Freddy Goes to Florida**), was published. From 1927 to 1940 he worked as an editor, columnist, and reviewer for a number of different magazines, including *The Outlook and Independent*, *The New Yorker*, *Fiction Parade*, and *Scribner's Commentator*. He began writing short stories for adults in 1915 and published more than 180 over the next forty years. Of these stories, the twenty-six featuring a talking horse named "Ed" became the basis of the 1960's cult classic television series "Mr. Ed." Starting in the late 1930's Walter began publishing a new Freddy book each year, the last appearing in 1958, the year he died at his home in Roxbury, New York. A lifelong book collector, Walter was also an antiquarian bookseller, a musician, and an artist. His hobby was learning new languages and his personal library contained books in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish.

About the illustrator

Kurt Wiese was born in the small town of Minden, Germany, in 1887. In 1927, he immigrated to the United States. Although he had no formal training in art, Wiese began a career as one of America's most productive and accomplished children's book illustrators, providing illustrations for more than four hundred books (nineteen of which he also wrote). He received the Caldecott Honor in 1945 for **You Can Write Chinese** and in 1948 for **Fish in the Air**. He was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1932 for **Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze** and received Newbery Honors for **Honk, the Moose** in 1935 and **Li Lun, Lad of Courage** in 1948. He died in Frenchtown, New Jersey, in 1974.

Resources and Further Reading

Further Reading

Cart, Michael. **What's So Funny? Wit and Humor in American Children's Literature**. HarperCollins. 1995.

Egoff, Sheila. **Worlds Within: Children's Fantasy from the Middle Ages to Today**. ALA Editions. 1988.

Hochschild, Adam. "Pig Tales." *The New York Times Book Review*. 22 May 1994.

The Wit and Wisdom of Freddy and His Friends. The Overlook Press. 2000.

"Brooks, Walter R." **Junior Book of Authors**. Edited by Stanley Jasspon Kunitz. H. W. Wilson. 1951.

"Brooks, Walter R." *Something About the Author*. Gale Research.

Internet Sites

<http://www.freddythepig.org>

"Freddy's Home Pen . . . uh, Page!" is the official site of the Friends of Freddy, the international Freddy fan club. It contains news, information about Walter R. Brooks and the Freddy books, pictures, poems, and links to other sites.

<http://www.harley.com/freddy-the-pig/>

Harley Hahn, author of *Harley Hahn's Guide to the Internet*, offers miscellaneous information about Freddy, his friends, the Internet, and some original poetry that's almost as good as Freddy's!

<http://www.naplesnews.com/01/08/neapolitan/d664167a.htm>

An article from the Naples, Florida Daily News about the republication of the Freddy books and the revival of interest in America's most talented pig.

<http://www.rny.com/pubs/ss/features/freddy/freddy.html>

A biography of Walter R. Brooks that appeared in his hometown newspaper, the Rome, New York Sentinel.

<http://www.usatoday.com/life/enter/books/book953.htm>

A delightful article from USA Today about the Freddy revival.

Friends of Freddy

Founded in 1984, the Friends of Freddy is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the writings of Walter R. Brooks and his literary alter ego Freddy the Pig. From a handful of loyal fans the organization has grown into an international organization with more than six hundred members. It holds a national conference every two years in New York State at locations associated with the late Walter R. Brooks and the Freddy books. The organization endows the Walter R. Brooks Memorial Fund at the Roxbury, New York Library and operates the Needy Schools Donation Fund. For further information write to Friends of Freddy, P.O. Box 912, Greenbelt, MD 20768-0912 or visit the Friends' web site at www.freddythepig.org

Title Listing

Paperbacks available from Puffin Books
(hardcover editions published by Overlook Press)

Freddy Goes to Florida

0-14-131233-5 (PB)

0-87951-808-1 (HC)

Freddy Goes to the North Pole

0-14-230206-6 (PB)

1-58567-104-5 (HC)

Freddy the Detective

0-14-131234-3 (PB)

0-87951-809-X (HC)

Freddy the Politician

1-58567-080-4 (HC)

Freddy's Cousin Weedley

1-58567-309-9 (HC) *

Freddy and the Ignormus

0-14-230043-8 (PB)

0-87951-882-0 (HC)

Freddy and the Perilous Adventure

1-58567-178-9 (HC)

Freddy and the Bean Home News

0-14-230088-8 (PB)

1-58567-081-2 (HC)

Freddy and Mr. Camphor

1-58567-027-8 (HC)

Freddy and the Popinjay

1-58567-134-7 (HC)

Freddy and the Pied Piper

1-58567-226-2 (HC)

Freddy the Magician

1-58567-310-2 (HC) *

Freddy Goes Camping

1-58567-177-0 (HC)

Freddy Plays Football

0-14-230207-4 (PB)

1-58567-133-9 (HC)

Freddy the Cowboy

1-58567-225-4 (HC)

Freddy Rides Again

1-58567-268-8 (HC)

Freddy the Pilot

0-14-230044-6 (PB)

0-87951-941-X (HC)

Freddy and the Space Ship

0-14-230089-6 (PB)

1-58567-105-3 (HC)

The Collected Poems of Freddy the Pig

1-58567-136-3 (HC)

Freddy and the Men from Mars

1-58567-269-6 (HC)

Freddy and the Baseball Team from Mars

0-87951-942-8 (HC)

Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans

0-87951-883-9 (HC)

Freddy and the Dragon

1-58567-026-X (HC)

The Wit & Wisdom of Freddy and His Friends

0-87951-725-5 (HC)

The Art of Freddy the Pig

1-58567-315-3 (HC) *

The Adventures of Freddy the Pig

1-58567-346-3 (HC) *

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