

1997

Robinson, Barbara. *The Best School Year Ever.* HarperCollins, 1994.

SUMMARY:

It's another year at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, and the Herdmans are back. They are the most famous (or infamous) kids not only in the school and town but most likely in the entire world as well. This year could be the Worst/Best School Year Ever!

QUESTIONS:

What are some of the problems that the students at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School must face, and how do they solve them?

On the cover of this book, the author has written "Worst" and crossed it off and writes in "Best" as part of the title. Why does she do this?

What are some examples of what students do because the Herdmans make them nervous?

What are some compliments that Beth comes up with for Imogene Herdman?

The Herdmans aren't allowed to ride the school bus so they start spreading rumors that something is wrong with the bus. Describe what happens to the other children as they hear what the Herdmans are saying about the bus.

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I did some of the things that the Herdmans did, my parents would...

If I would have to choose one of the Herdmans as my favorite, I would pick _____ because. . .

A time when I thought I was punished unfairly was when. . .

ACTIVITIES:

Write your own headlines for events that happen at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Write a newspaper headline about something that has happened in your classroom recently, and explain why it is newsworthy.

Create a Top 10 List of ways to make this school year "the best school year ever."

Create a personal list of compliments about yourself that your classmates might say about you.

Learn about fire safety at your school and at home.

Describe a talent that you have and explain how you use it.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 3-6.

BOOKTALK:

Imagine a year-long classroom project called “Compliments for Classmates,” and you draw the name of a student whose family is the most notorious in the school. Sixth-grader Beth Bradley must find something good to say about Imogene, one of THE Herdmans. What good qualities can you find in someone whose siblings’ shenanigans include: kidnapping a bald baby, “tattooing” his head, and displaying him to others for a fee; washing a cat in a washing machine; and ingeniously sabotaging the school’s Fire Safety Day observance? Hopefully, Beth will be able to find some redeeming qualities in Imogene.

READ-ALIKES:

Robinson, Barbara. *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. HarperCollins, 1972.
Robinson, Barbara. *The Best Halloween Ever*. Joanna Cotler Books, 2004.
Blume, Judy. *Superfudge*. Dutton, 1980.
Hermes, Patricia. *Nothing but Trouble, Trouble, Trouble*. Scholastic, 1994.
Hurwitz, Johanna. *Elisa Michaels, Bigger & Better*. HarperCollins, 2003.
Kinney, Jeff. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: a Novel in Cartoons*. Amulet Books, 2007.
Sachar, Louis. *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*. HarperCollins, 1993.

RELATED WEB SITES:

Barbara Robinson: <http://usawrites4kids.drury.edu/authors/robinson>

Barbara Robinson Biography:

http://www.harpercollins.com/authors/12649/Barbara_Robinson/index.aspx

The Best School Year Ever Literature Guide:

<http://www.nancypolette.com/LitGuidesText/bestschoolyearever.htm>

eThemes - Literature: “The Best School Year Ever” by Barbara Robinson:

<http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000437.shtml>

OTHER RECOGNITION:

Winner of a Children’s Choice Award in each of the following states:

Arkansas, 1997; Colorado, 1996; Georgia, 1998; Hawaii, 1999; Iowa, 1997;
Nebraska, 1997; New Mexico, 1998; North Dakota, 1996; Pennsylvania, 1998;
South Carolina, 1997; South Dakota, 1997; Tennessee, 1997.