



The Talent Seekers

Jemima Pett

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Humphrey is on the run. He has no friends, no past, no purpose, and no future. He's just a guinea pig trying to find his way west in a world of dark forests, wild hills, strong castles, and assorted vagabonds and other nameless things that might or might not begin with the letter V.

White Horse Castle has a proud past but an uncertain future. The new king, Benson, is trying to hold his realm together against the avaricious intentions of his neighbour, Lord Colman of Castle Deeping. Fortunately, White Horse Castle has a secret. It knows that there are special guinea pig people out there... people who need a purpose... people with skills and talents that could be put to good use. The trouble is, how to find them?

In the fifth book in the Princlings series, we find the young outcast from the Lost City of Arbor travelling west as his mother suggested. He is rounded up amongst other exiles, but escapes, and finds himself among people that could be his friends, something he has never had before. But they are under threat, and Humphrey's adventures twist and turn as he is called to his destiny by an unknown force, one that calls to his special hearing skills. He meets other talented individuals and learns to be a team, to work with others for the common good.

It's a tale of greed, of fighting, of cruelty and of a darker place than the ones we've met so far in the Princlings world. Heroes and heroines emerge from the unlikeliest of places to find laughter and friendship and a place where they belong.

The Talent Seekers is a fantasy adventure story with paranormal influences and some pitched battles. It is set in the months between the Prologue and the Epilogue of the Princlings and the Lost City, but with otherwise little connection to the previous stories in the series. It's suitable for readers aged 10 and upwards.

The Talent Seekers Details

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Bruce says

Interesting style, reminiscent of early twentieth century storybooks. MUCH better grammar and vocabulary than most YA authors. Not a strong storyline, but the precision and clarity of thought made it a pleasure to read.

Rebecca Douglass says

This book is set in the world of The Princlings of the East, and intersects with just a few places and characters from the other books in the series, but stands alone very well. The level of tension and danger is ratcheted up a bit from the other books in the series, leading the author to give it a "PG-13" rating, with which I largely agree (though it is NOTHING like as deadly and dangerous and scary as, say, the last several Harry Potter books, which are happily devoured by amazingly young children). (There is nothing in the way of what we euphemistically call "adult situations" in the book as far as I recall).

I found the story riveting--it cost me some sleep, as I forged on to find out what happened next. Just exactly what and who Humphrey is, and who and what his enemies may be, unfolded gradually, with just enough clues to keep me jumping. One thing I did find: Humphrey first appears in the Prologue to The Princlings and the Lost City, and I went back and re-read that to get a better grip on what was up with him. It tells us some things that are never directly revealed in this book (so get it and read it too!).

As always the writing is clean and clear and the editing and proof-reading top-notch. The world is well-created and well-presented, and Humphrey is a hero we can all root for.

Wendy says

I love Humphrey! Sensitive, thoughtful, with a special talent for listening, as well as a photographic memory, the wonderful central character in this, the third book which I have read in Jemima Pett's original and inspiring series, stole my heart. A loner and an outsider, poor Humphrey finds himself swept up in a maelstrom of events beyond his control when he is caught up in a frightening attack by unknown baddies. Joining forces with some new companions, something which doesn't come easily to a lone guinea pig accustomed to solitude, Humphrey sets off on an unexpected and not entirely welcome adventure. He is soon led into a society of intrigue and violence, where the situation rapidly spirals out of control.

All is not well in guinea pig world and trouble of the worst kind threatens all the castles and kingdoms; terrorism, war, pirates and vampires – what a terrifying combination! How on earth will Humphrey cope? Fortunately for our unlikely hero, his talents are recognised and put to good use in a Special Forces unit and, for the first time, he finds himself working as part of a team. Danger and pitfalls galore await him, however, and his courage is really put to the test. If you want to know whether Humphrey triumphs over adversity, you'll have to read the book for yourself, because I'm not going to tell you!

This was quite a dark story and, at times, rather violent, which some readers may find off-putting. From a personal point of view though, I'm becoming hooked on this series and am thoroughly enjoying the adventures that the intrepid heroes get themselves mixed up in. Beautifully written and with skilful description which brings the scenes alive, the narrative draws you deep into the heart of the action, whilst the characters are so cleverly depicted that you almost find yourself forgetting they are guinea pigs!

Jemima Pett says

This is my book, and the first I've written since I started publishing the series. I wrote the first draft for Camp NaNoWriMo last year, set it aside till the new year, then re-worked it.

It is part of the Princlings series, but takes us off into other parts of the realms, where things are not so cozy and comfortable as they are in Princlings Fred and George's part of the world. Here, displaced persons are roaming the country and being hunted for sport by the occupants of one of the castles. There are hints of vampires and werewolves as well, but these play a minor part.

There are strong themes of finding yourself, developing skills and making friendships. Humphrey is a damaged soul (he escaped from the Lost City in that book's Prologue) just trying to make sense of the world. He has very special skills - which develop as the book progresses and he learns how to use them - and the castle that opposes the one that hunts people down seeks talented people to help them fight oppression.

I think it's suitable for the older MG reader, or someone who is growing up with the books, and also for YA readers who want a break from the emotional angst of relationships. My characters may have emotional angst, but not in the same way! It could be read as a stand-alone, but threads in this book will get entangled with previous themes in future stories!

Diane says

I haven't read the previous books in this series, but this book was easy to read as a stand-alone. Very cute fantasy story about ... guinea pigs! Who live in castles! And do really cool things ... running on walls (and ceilings, in some cases!) like little furry ninjas, seeing through walls, hearing sounds at a GREAT distance, telepathic thought, and so forth.

As others have said, it is impossible to tell that the story is about guinea pigs. It mentions 'hair' once, or twice, but no other clues that would suggest they aren't humans. Soooo, I just went ahead and read it while picturing teenagers as the characters. Then I got so angsty to KNOW, I finally tracked the info down online, and found out ... guinea pigs! Too cool. I finished the book with a whole new cast of 'pictures' in my head, and it was much more fun as guinea pigs. :)

I felt it was well written, kept my interest, and the story moved along at a good pace. Since I am a diehard nonfiction reader, this is HIGH praise from me. ;)

If you like fantasy fiction about adorable furry critters, you'll love this.

3 Stars = I **liked** the book. I enjoyed it. I'm glad I read it.

Julie Grasso says

Another intricately woven story in the land of the Princlings. This time we journey with Humphrey. A gentle and trepid soul with a talent for listening to things above and beyond the realms of the everyday. Humphrey gets swept up in the urgency of an escape. In the chaos he makes new friends who take him on an adventure which he would only have deemed possible from the books that he has memorised. Oh did I mention he also has a photographic memory.

We are drawn into a tale of intrigue as Ms Pett slowly divulges little snippets of information about each of the new friends. Humphrey plays along, unsure of how he fits into this new world of castles, kings and captains, but things are not always what they seem. A group of terrorists attacks the castle that Humphrey and his friends are doing their best to blend in. He realises he is not alone and his talent for listening comes into play when he is recruited into a special unit.

Humphrey is tested beyond anything he has ever known, unsure of who is friend or foe. Using every ounce of knowledge from his books, combined with his unique and special talents, he bands together with his unit. They must prevail against a force so evil, that it threatens the livelihood of the entire land of the Princlings.

I think this leans much more towards a Young Adult literary read, with its intricate plot, formidable cast and quite violence themes. Again I enjoyed Ms Pett's style of a slow but intriguing pace, in *The Talent Seekers*.

Victoria Zigler says

I think this book is my favourite of the series. It is so far, anyhow. I absolutely love Humphrey as a character! The only way I could have enjoyed this book more is if the author had used guinea pig terms instead of people terms for the characters - "paw" instead of "hand" for example - which is something I believe I mentioned when reviewing some of the earlier books in the series. But I suppose that's a personal preference thing, and am not going to let it influence my rating, since I loved everything else about the book.
