



## ***Travels of an Extraordinary Hamster* by Astrid Desbordes illustrated by Pauline Martin**

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Hamster is indeed an extraordinary character in the sense that he is astoundingly self-absorbed. He sees the world from the viewpoint of his own needs and aspirations. For example, when he decides to make a space-ship to visit the Moon he delegates Snail to build the craft - although he doesn't invite Snail on the journey.

Fortunately for him, Hamster has an understanding group of friends who are used to his egocentric ways and love him regardless - even when he is unkind. They include him in all their activities and tolerate his conceited behaviour.

In contrast, Hamster's friends shine as lovable characters in these illustrated travel tales. Hamster is invited to join them on a journey to visit Bear's cousin on an ice floe. Their adventure is a bird's-eye-view of tolerance as the diverse personalities bond together. The relationship between shy, blind Mole and little Hedgehog is sheer delight.

Travellers will recognise the cultural learning curve that takes place when the green land dwellers meet the creatures that inhabit the North Pole. Wry humour highlights the misunderstandings and connections that take place. Hospitality and goodwill ensure the interaction is a success.

The clearly delineated illustrations showcase the characteristics of each animal. Subtle changes in facial expressions indicate the inner thoughts they are too polite to voice. The pages have copious clean white space without borders which allows the characters to move in a range of directions. The artist takes readers on a colour-filled visual journey.

This quality publication is printed on sturdy paper and is designed to be shared with readers of all ages.

**Reviewed by children's book author,  
Jean Bennett**

