



Beezus and Ramona

By Beverly Cleary
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Introduction

Beezus Quimby tries very hard to be patient with her little sister, but four-year-old Ramona has the habit of doing the most unpredictable, annoying, embarrassing things in the world. How many nine-year-old girls have to put up with a silly little sister who hops around in rabbit ears and bakes a rubber doll into her sister's birthday cake? Sometimes Beezus doesn't like Ramona very much, and that makes her feel very guilty. Sisters are supposed to love each other, but pesky little Ramona just doesn't seem very lovable to Beezus.

Discussion Questions

1. Beezus Quimby's biggest problem is her nursery school-aged sister Ramona. Besides the fact that Ramona is "just plain exasperating" and always manages to get her own way, there are lots of times when Beezus just doesn't find her very lovable. Why do you think older sisters and brothers make this sort of complaint? What criticism do younger siblings make in response?
2. When Ramona writes her name in a library book, the librarian says the book belongs to Ramona once the fine for the damage has been paid. To Beezus this doesn't quite seem fair. What alternative solution does Miss Evans, the librarian, come up with? Do you think it is a good idea?
3. Compared to Ramona, who has too much imagination, Beezus sometimes feels like she has none at all. But one afternoon in art class, Beezus finds the inspiration to get rid of Ramona and to paint her best picture yet! And it is fun! What has Beezus learned about herself from this experience?
4. When Ramona misbehaves by taking a single bit out of a number of apples and tossing the rest onto the floor, Aunt Bea suggests that Beezus and her parents say nothing about it. Why? What is Ramona's reaction to not being scolded?
5. Ramona invites a lot of children to a party without asking her mother's permission, explaining later, "When I ask you won't let me do things." What do you think of this reason for not asking permission? What do you think of the party that Mrs. Quimby and Beezus improvise?
6. At her birthday dinner Beezus tells Ramona, "You can't have jelly on your mashed potatoes because you aren't supposed to." Of course, Beezus is right, but isn't this also an example of the difference between Beezus and Ramona, between being older and being younger? What are some arguments for and against the idea that "there are some things we don't do, because we aren't supposed to?"
7. Beezus discovers that as girls, her mother and Aunt Bea had a relationship much like hers and Ramona's—and that wonderful Aunt Beatrice used to be every bit as awful as Ramona! Do you ever try to imagine your parents or your aunts and uncles as children? Is it hard or easy? How do you think they were like you or different from you?

About the author

Beverly Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon, and, until she was old enough to attend school, lived on a farm in Yamhill, a town so small it had no library. Her mother arranged with the State Library to have books sent to Yamhill and acted as librarian in a lodge room upstairs over a bank. There Mrs. Cleary learned to love books. When the family moved to Portland, where Mrs. Cleary attended grammar school and high school, she soon found herself in the low reading circle, an experience that has given her sympathy for the problems of struggling readers. By the third grade she had conquered reading and spent much of her childhood either with books or on her way to and from the public library. Before long her school librarian was suggesting that she should write for boys and girls when she grew up. The idea appealed to her, and she decided that someday she would write the books she longed to read but was unable to find on the library shelves, funny stories about her neighborhood and the sort of children she knew.

After graduation from junior college in Ontario, California, and the University of California at Berkeley, Mrs. Cleary entered the School of Librarianship at the University of Washington, Seattle. There she specialized in library work with children. She was Children's Librarian in Yakima, Washington, until she married Clarence Cleary and moved to California. The Clearys are the parents of twins, now grown. Mrs. Cleary's hobbies are travel and needlework.

Mrs. Cleary's books have earned her many prestigious awards, including the 1984 John Newbery Medal for *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children in 1983. Her *Ramona and Her Father* and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* were named 1978 and 1982 Newbery Honor Books, respectively. Among Mrs. Cleary's other awards are the American Library Association's 1975 Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, the Catholic Library Association's 1980 Regina Medal, and the University of Southern Mississippi's 1982 Silver Medallion, all presented in recognition of her lasting contribution to children's literature. In addition, Mrs. Cleary was the 1984 United States author nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, a prestigious international award. Equally important are the more than 35 statewide awards Mrs. Cleary's books have received based on the direct votes of her young readers. The Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden for Children featuring bronze statues of Ramona Quimby, Henry Huggins, and Ribsby, was recently opened in Portland, Oregon.

This witty and warm author is truly an international favorite. Mrs. Cleary's books appear in over twenty countries in fourteen languages and her characters, including Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, Otis Spofford, and Beezus and Ramona Quimby, as well as Ribsby, Socks, and

Ralph S. Mouse, have delighted children for generations. There have been Japanese, Spanish, and Swedish television programs based on the Henry Huggins series. PBS-TV aired a ten-part series based on the Ramona stories. One-hour adaptations of the three Ralph S. Mouse books have been shown on ABC-TV. All of Mrs. Cleary's adaptations still can be seen on cable television, and the Ramona adaptations are available in video stores.