

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Henry and Beezus

by

### Beverly Cleary

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### Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Henry and Beezus  
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Book Level: 4.6  
Interest Level: MG

Accompanied by friend Beezus, bubble-gum tycoon Henry schemes to get a bike of his own.

**Topics:** Humor/Funny, Funny; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Series, Henry Huggins; Transportation/Vehicles, Bicycles

### Main Characters

Beezus or Beatrice one of Henry's best friends, a girl who lives in his neighborhood

Henry Huggins the principal character in the story, a young boy who desperately wants to own a bicycle

Mary Jane one of Henry's neighbors, who is prissy and a tattletale

Mr. and Mrs. Grumbie Henry's next-door neighbors who don't care for Ribsby

Mr. Huggins Henry's father

Mrs. Huggins Henry's mother

Ramona Beezus's little sister, a girl who often causes problems for Beezus or Henry

Ribsby Henry's dog

Robert a good friend of Henry's

Scooter a neighbor of Henry's who has a bike and makes Henry jealous

### Vocabulary

**drum majorette** a woman who leads a marching band or drum corps, often twirling a baton

**nervously** done with uneasiness or fearfulness

**wampum** a slang term for something to trade

### Synopsis

Henry wants a new bike more than anything, but his parents can't afford one. As he thinks about what he can do to get one, his dog, Ribsby, decides to steal the Grumbies' roast and run away. Eventually Scooter, a boy who has a bicycle and makes Henry jealous, comes to the rescue. He takes the roast away from Ribsby and returns it to Mr. Grumbie.

When Henry is walking home one day through a vacant lot, he finds lots of discarded boxes of pink bubble gum. He decides that by selling the gum, he can make money for his bike fund. However, the principal tells every class in the school that chewing gum is not a good idea, and Henry ends up taking the gum back to the vacant lot.

Henry's next plan for making money is to take over Scooter's paper route during Easter break. The morning after he has talked Scooter into this plan, Henry discovers that Ribsby has learned to fetch papers so well that he brings every paper on his street to Henry's front door. To keep his deal with Scooter, Henry has to figure out a way to break Ribsby's habit. He does this by shooting Ribsby with a water gun every time he picks up a paper.

Beezus knows how much Henry wants a bike and tells him about an auction of bikes at the police station. Henry can go, but he has to take his friend Beezus and her little sister, Ramona, with him. At the auction Henry realizes that the only way to buy a bike is to be heard by the auctioneer. He gets his chance when Ramona gets lost, and the auctioneer finds her. When Beezus retrieves Ramona, she bids on a bike for Henry. Henry is thrilled until he discovers it's a girl's bike.

Henry takes home the broken-down bike and tries to fix it up. When he tries to ride it and takes a fall in front of his friends, he decides to put it away and forget about it. His mother offers to buy him a second-hand bike, but he decides he will wait until he can buy a new one.

Henry's dream finally does come true one evening when he and his family attend the grand opening of a huge supermarket. He wins a door prize of fifty

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dollars worth of services at a beauty salon, which his mother and other women agree to buy from him. Soon he has almost enough money to buy his bike. His father agrees to throw in ten dollars, and Henry rides home on his shiny red bike. He makes sure he sounds the horn as he rides past Scooter's house.

## Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Initial Understanding

Why did Henry make sure he rode past Scooter's house on his way home with his new bike?

*He likely wanted to show off in front of Scooter.*

### Literary Analysis

Who is the antagonist in the book? Why?

*Scooter is the antagonist because he has a bike and keeps flaunting that fact in Henry's face. This causes conflict between the two boys, as well as conflict within Henry because of his jealous feelings.*

### Inferential Comprehension

Should Henry have bought the bike at the auction?

*Although the bike Henry ended up buying was a girl's bike needing so much work that he abandoned it, buying it taught him something. He realized he didn't want to settle for a second-hand bike at all, he wanted a new one and would wait until he could get it.*

### Constructing Meaning

Predict how Henry will feel in the parade.

*He will be proud that he has his own bike with glittery spokes.*

change the story. For example, have them put Henry in an upscale neighborhood. Would he even have the problem he has -- no bike? Most likely his parents would have the money to buy him one. Then put him in a low-income development. Would he ever have been able to buy a bike?

**Understanding Characterization** Henry is jealous of Scooter's bike. This is a common feeling between students. Have the students think about something now or in the past that they want or have wanted that has made them feel jealous. What did they do about it? Were they like Henry who worked hard every chance he could to make money to buy a bike? Did they act openly jealous toward the other person? Have them discuss their feelings and situations in small groups.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** The story was told in the third person, but from Henry's perspective. Ask the students to rewrite a part of the story from a different perspective. For example, they could tell it from Beezus's point of view and see how the story would change. Or they could tell it as a narrative in the first person.

**Recognizing Feelings** When Henry is embarrassed by the door prize he has won, he acts on impulse to try to make everyone forget what has happened by eating dog food. Have the students think about a time when they felt embarrassed. What was their reaction? Would they have acted differently if they were in Henry's shoes? In general, what do they do when they are embarrassed?

## Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** The story takes place in a middle-class neighborhood in America. Have the class change the setting and discuss how it would