

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Henry and Ribsy

by

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Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Henry and Ribsy
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Interest Level: MG

Henry Huggins and his dog, Ribsy, go fishing and end up as wet as the huge salmon they try to catch.

Award: Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Animals, Dogs; Animals, Fish;
Humor/Funny, Funny; Series, Henry
Huggins

Main Characters

Beezus Quimby one of the girls in Henry's neighborhood who is about Henry's age

Henry a ten-year-old boy who must keep his dog Ribsy out of trouble to earn the right to go on a fishing trip

Miss Mullen the Glenwood School principal

Mr. Grumbie Mr. Huggins's fishing companion

Mr. Huggins Henry's father

Mrs. Huggins Henry's mother

Ramona Quimby Beezus's strong-willed little sister

Ribsy Henry's good-natured dog, who frequently gets Henry in trouble

Robert Henry's classmate

Scooter McCarthy one of Henry's neighborhood friends, who is two years older than Henry and very competitive

Vocabulary

desperately frantically; done or said in a hurried, hopeless manner

galvanized covered with the metal zinc through the use of an electric current; this coating is often applied to garbage cans and rain gutters to prevent rusting

grimly in a serious and determined manner

mackinaw a heavy woolen coat

refuse garbage

smelt small silver-colored food fish

Synopsis

Ten-year-old Henry Huggins and his dog Ribsy accompany Mr. Huggins to Al's Thrifty Service Station. Henry persuades Al to let him stay in the car for the ride up the grease rack while his father runs some errands. A policeman pulls up to the Supermarket next door and leaves the squad car door open to run in and buy a bottle of milk to go with his sandwich. That is all the invitation Ribsy needs to devour the lunch. When Henry's father returns, he promises that in return for Henry keeping Ribsy out of further trouble, he will take Henry along on his annual salmon fishing trip.

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Huggins decide that Henry should be responsible for taking out the garbage each day. This causes Ribsy to consider the garbage can as Henry's property. Consequently, when the garbage man comes to empty the big can, Ribsy attacks him for "stealing" the garbage can.

Next, Henry has an adventure that results from Mrs. Huggins taking advantage of a sale on electric hair clippers. She gives him a disastrous haircut that he covers by wearing a sailor hat. Mrs. Huggins shares the clippers bargain with the mothers of two of Henry's friends, Scooter and Robert. They suffer the same fate as Henry and also opt for sailor hats.

In the next chapter, Henry would like to get rid of two loose front teeth. He gets Ribsy to do the job by having Ribsy play tug-of-war with string tied to his teeth.

Next, Ramona, the little sister of Henry's friend Beezus, steals Ribsy's bone and puts it in her lunchbox. Beezus, Henry, and Ribsy follow Ramona to the school playground. Ribsy's barking at Ramona upsets the mothers gathering for a P.T.A. meeting. Ramona climbs to the top of the jungle gym. The mothers, thinking that Ramona is trying to escape Ribsy, gather in Ramona's defense. Miss Mullen, the principal, intervenes on Ribsy's behalf

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and asks Ramona to give back Ribsby's bone.

Finally, Henry gets to go fishing with his father and Mr. Grumbie. They give in to Henry's last-minute plea that Ribsby be allowed to come. Mr. Grumbie, of course, is upset when Ribsby causes him to lose a salmon. Both Henry and Ribsby are dropped off on shore for the remainder of the day. Late in the afternoon, Henry spots a large salmon struggling up a stream, and he catches it bare handed. He is thrilled that he has finally accomplished his goal of catching a salmon.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

It would be hard to imagine the Huggins family ever having to sell Ribsby or offer the dog to any family that would be willing to take it and give it a good home. If, however, they were to run an ad on Ribsby, how many positive things could they put in it about Ribsby? What details that you remember would be good to have in such an ad?

Students may recall from the text such things as Ribsby's playfulness and being good around children, his ability to be a good guard dog, and his loyalty.

Literary Analysis

Why is Woofies an appropriate name for a dog food? Why does the Woofies Dog Food jingle in the first and last chapter make the product more appealing?

Students will probably say that Woofies is an appropriate name because the sound of the name is much like what a dog would make when contented from having a good meal, or pleading to be served one. Students usually respond favorably to rhymes. It would be predictable that if you had another dog food ad cut from a newspaper or magazine, but it did not have a jingle, the class would favor Woofies.

Inferential Comprehension

Based on Henry's experience in his first salmon fishing trip, what do you suppose would be true of the following September?

Students may suggest that Ribsby would not go next time, but that Henry would be as enthusiastic as this year. With another year of maturity, Henry might realize Ribsby's unpredictability in a boat. Students might also project that the following year might mark the beginning of a father/son tradition for Mr. Huggins and Henry that does not include Mr. Grumbie. There is also the possibility that Robert and/or Scooter would be included.

Constructing Meaning

Henry had Ribsby pull his two teeth out by tugging on a jump rope. How have you pulled your teeth out? Did you find any coins under your pillow the next morning?

Students will likely have interesting stories about tying string to a doorknob, or pressing a finger against a cheek to force a loose tooth out, or eating something like peanut butter. They may also relate various instances of receiving money for their teeth.

Teachable Skills

Comparing and Contrasting At least four names of fish or marine life were mentioned in this story: Chinook salmon, silverside, smelt, and jellyfish. Have groups of students choose one and research it. Conduct a class discussion on the fish and construct a Venn diagram with four circles showing differences and similarities among these four.

Identifying Reading Strategies An etymology is a description of the history of a word. Included in that history is the word as it was spelled in the language of its first use and what it meant when it was first used. For example, the English word "sabotage" comes from the French word "sabot," which means "shoe." Factory workers in France used their shoes to jam the machinery when the owners would not pay attention to various demands the workers were making about pay,

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safety, length of work day, etc. Because the word "sabot" became associated with intentional destruction, we now use the word "sabotage" to refer to military actions, like blowing up bridges. The word "mackinaw" also has an interesting etymology. After showing the class how to find etymologies using an unabridged dictionary or the Internet, assign the students to locate and report the etymology of "mackinaw."

Extending Meaning Ribsy is an appealing dog because of his friendly personality. There is a tremendous variety of personality and physical characteristics among dogs because of the large number of breeds. Ask students to list the five characteristics they believe are most important in a dog. Compare and discuss the lists as a class and determine if a particular breed is a favorite of the class.

Understanding the Author's Craft A humorous poem about dog food appears at the beginning and end of the story. A cinquain is a five-line non-rhyming poem. Students can summarize and clarify ideas by writing them in this form. Display the following cinquain about the author as an example. Beverly Cleary (the topic) intelligent-humorous (2 describing words about Cleary) publishing-picturing-enjoying (3 action words about Cleary) she's-a-favorite-author (student opinion or reaction) lady (a synonym of the topic) Ask the students to write a cinquain about one of the characters in the book.