

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Ramona's World

by

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Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Ramona's World
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This story follows the adventures of nine-year-old Ramona...at home with big sister Beezus and baby sister Roberta, and at school in Mrs. Meacham's fourth grade class.

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Main Characters

Abby Beezus's friend
Beatrice (Beezus) Ramona's big sister
Clawed the Kidd family's cat
Daisy Kidd Ramona's best friend
Danny (Yard Ape) a boy whom Ramona likes; he likes Ramona, too
Howie a friend and neighbor of Ramona
Jeremy Kidd Daisy's brother
Mr. Quimby Ramona's father
Mrs. Kidd Daisy's relaxed, easy-going mother
Mrs. Meacham Ramona's fourth-grade teacher
Mrs. Pitt a lady who lives by the bus stop
Mrs. Quimby Ramona's mother
Mutley the Kidd family's dog

Ramona Quimby a fourth-grade girl who learns how to handle the imperfections and challenges of growing up

Roberta Quimby Ramona's baby sister

Susan Kushner a seemingly perfect girl whom Ramona does not like

Vocabulary

asinine failure to use good judgment or show intelligence

balefully with some sadness

calluses hard or thickened areas of the skin

damsel a young woman

mulish unreasonable and inflexible

unencumbered free of burdens

Synopsis

Ramona Quimby is a nine-year-old girl who lives with her mother and father, her older sister named Beezus, and her new baby sister named Roberta. Ramona is eager to start her new school year in the fourth grade.

When Ramona gets to school she sees former classmates and friends and meets a new girl, Daisy Kidd, and their new teacher, Mrs. Meacham. The first day goes well since Ramona likes Daisy immediately, enjoys writing about Roberta as an assignment for Mrs. Meacham, and shows pride when her paper is read aloud. However, the next day Ramona is disheartened to see the spelling words on the chalkboard; most of them are words from her essay. The other students laugh at some of her errors, and Ramona decides learning is not fun when it comes to spelling. At home, Ramona's mother reassures her that her spelling will improve. Ramona receives another morale boost when little sister Roberta imitates Ramona's actions.

Later that week, Ramona is invited to Daisy's house. Here she meets Mrs. Kidd, Jeremy, who is Daisy's brother, Mutley the dog, and Clawed the cat. Ramona likes the informality at the Kidd household. The next time Ramona visits the Kidds, she falls through the attic floor while the girls are playing a

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game. Despite the extensive damage to the dining room ceiling, Mrs. Kidd is understanding.

Meanwhile, Beezus is going through her own growing pains. She gets her ears pierced without her parents' permission, and she anxiously prepares for a boy-girl party at her friend Abby's house. Finally the day of the party arrives, and Beezus's anxiety is relieved. Beezus decides boys are funny, since they would not come in the house but instead spent the whole night out in the yard goofing off.

As the school year continues, Ramona's conflict with Mrs. Meacham does as well. The teacher starts to confiscate notes from the students and reads them for spelling errors. Shortly thereafter, though, Ramona becomes more spelling conscious. She and Daisy notice a license plate number with a misspelled word. The car belongs to a librarian, but they find out it is spelled that way because of the six-letter limit on Oregon's personalized license plates. Their quest continues when they find an ad published in the local newspaper which contains many errors. The girls write a letter to the accountant who placed the ad, and they receive a letter back admitting the errors. When the girls share their experience with Mrs. Meacham, she is proud of their work and attitude.

At home, Ramona takes on additional responsibilities. She helps with Roberta and cat-sits for the Kidds when they leave town. When Ramona baby-sits during her mother's short errand, Ramona is able to successfully rescue Roberta when her head gets stuck in the cat condo.

When February arrives, Ramona is disappointed to see her school picture; she had scowled and wrinkled her nose when it was taken. Ramona explains to her family that the photographer said to say "peas" instead of "cheese," and she thought of Roberta spitting out her peas. Ramona makes good use of her picture though on Valentine's Day. She gives one to Danny as a valentine. He is amused and writes her a humorous poem.

Spring finally arrives, and Ramona announces she

would like to have her birthday party at the park. Ramona eagerly makes out her guest list but is disappointed when her mother has her add Susan, a girl whom Ramona dislikes because of past conflicts. On the day of the party, the girls arrive with interesting looking presents. But the celebration takes a turn when the girls pay more attention to Roberta than Ramona, Danny and his friends nearly crash the party, and Susan causes a big fuss about germs on the birthday cake. Matters are resolved when Susan cries and admits she wants to be less perfect and more popular like Ramona and the boys are invited to eat the extra cake. Ramona decides the day was nearly perfect. She feels better about Susan, she has Daisy for a best friend, Danny likes her, and ten seems like a perfect age.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Beezus gets her ears pierced without permission. Why does her mother and father react the way they do?

Beezus is considered to be a responsible girl and does not make a habit of doing things like this without permission. What she does is not that terrible in the eyes of her parents. Her parents take her actions as those of someone coming out of her shell. Consequently, they are not angry with her.

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Literary Analysis

Growing-up experiences can vary since girls and boys sometimes enjoy different activities at the same age. Support this statement by finding examples based on Beezus's experiences in high school and Ramona's experiences in the fourth grade. What have been your own experiences with boys and girls at your grade level?

In this story, the high school girls and boys enjoy parties. But the girls want to dance, try on makeup, and act grown up. The boys want to watch TV, play sports, hang around only with other boys, stand on their hands, and talk about motorized vehicles. In the fourth grade, the girls want boys to notice them and talk nice to them. The boys are embarrassed easily and want to tease girls. The boys seek attention from girls at this age by being rough, showing off, and calling girls names. The students' own perceptions and experiences may vary from those of Ramona and Beezus.

Inferential Comprehension

Which family -- the Quimbys, the Kidds, or the Kushners -- would be good for a child to grow up in? Support your answers from incidents in the story.

The Quimbys are a loving and caring family. The parents listen to the concerns of their daughters and consider their views on topics such as dance lessons, pierced ears, baby-sitting, cat-sitting, and spelling problems. The Kidds' informal household consists of loving pets who get along, a brother who loves his sister, a mother who allows friends to come over and play freely and buys snacks that kids like, and a family who understands accidents. The Kushners emphasize perfection. Susan is supposed to act perfectly; they have a house that is perfectly clean. Susan's fear of germs on the birthday cake and her class "monitoring" reflect the views of her family. Most students will note positive points about the Quimbys and the Kidds, but may see the folly in the Kushners' ways.

Constructing Meaning

Ramona volunteers to cat-sit and baby-sit because she wants to feel grown-up. What is the negative side of taking on grown-up responsibilities? the positive side? Tell about a time when you took on responsibility. Were there any problems with what you volunteered to do?

One negative aspect of taking on responsibility is doing the task every day; the first few times may be fun, but later it becomes a chore. Also, unexpected things can happen, such as when Roberta puts her head in the cat's condo. On the other hand, taking on responsibility can be positive. Ramona pauses to think and solves the problem, proving she is responsible. Learning to be responsible is part of growing up.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Ramona's class celebrates Valentine's Day by exchanging cards and having candy and other treats. Have students look up the origin of Valentine's Day and trace its history. Students should prepare an oral or written report to share what they have found about this February tradition. The report should explain the tradition of exchanging cards and giving candy. Students can conclude by noting how the way we celebrate today is different from the way it was celebrated years ago.

Describing Actions or Events Ramona and Daisy have a frightening experience in the Kidds' attic. Have the students write a live news report about the incident. They can start by interviewing Ramona and Daisy. Students should include questions about events leading up to the fall and following the fall. An interview with Mrs. Kidd and Jeremy Kidd could also be included. Students can then use the interview to write a summary report that includes quotes.

Extending Meaning Susan feels she is disliked by her classmates. Have students write a letter to Susan giving her constructive advice on how she can become more likeable while allowing her to follow her family's rules when making her

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changes. Make advice specific.

Differentiating Fact and Opinion Ramona is excited about having a baby sister. Have students write a birth announcement for Roberta Quimby to be printed in the Quimbys' local newspaper. They should use facts about the family from the story.