

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Ramona the Brave

by

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Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Ramona the Brave

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Interest Level: MG

Six-year-old Ramona tries to cope with an unsympathetic first-grade teacher.

Topics: Family Life, Growing Up; Humor/Funny, Funny; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Recommended Reading, IRA/CBC Choice; Series, Ramona

Main Characters

Beatrice Quimby Ramona's older sister, who was nicknamed Beezus because Ramona could not say Beatrice when she was little; a girl who is very good at school and helpful at home

Howie Kemp Ramona's playmate; a serious person who does not add things to a story to make it more interesting

Mr. Cardoza Beatrice's teacher, who is very nice and is well-liked by both Beatrice and Ramona

Mr. Quimby Ramona's father, who works in an office downtown

Mrs. Griggs Ramona's first-grade teacher, who is serious and unexciting

Mrs. Quimby Ramona's mother, who gets a job during school hours at a doctor's office

Ramona Quimby a six-year-old girl, who is tired of everyone laughing at her when she is trying so hard to grow up

Vocabulary

astound to shock with fear or amazement; to surprise greatly

liberated to set free

postpone to put off until later

smithereens small pieces

toddler a young child who is just learning to walk

Synopsis

This is the story of a young girl who is trying hard to grow up. Ramona is six years old and has an older sister named Beezus. The story begins as Ramona and Beezus are walking home from the park.

Beezus is angry and Ramona is proud. Some boys were calling Beezus names so Ramona stood up to them. When the story comes out at home, Ramona learns that Beezus is angry at her for embarrassing her. Ramona is surprised and hurt.

The next day she gets into an argument with her sister. Their mother comes home and decides that the arguing is due to the girls sharing a room. Mother announces that she will begin working while the girls are at school, so they will be adding a bedroom to the house. Ramona is anxious about her mother working, but excited about the new room.

On the first day of school, Ramona meets Mrs. Griggs, her first-grade teacher. Things do not go as Ramona plans. When she tries to tell about the construction of her new room, the class laughs at her. Ramona thinks they do not believe her and is angry. When the class is making paper-bag owls, Ramona gets upset because Susan is copying her owl. Mrs. Griggs does not realize it and holds Susan's owl up to show the class. Ramona is angry at the unfairness. She throws her owl away so no one thinks she copied from Susan. Later Ramona crunches up Susan's owl. The teacher talks to Mr. and Mrs. Quimby, and Ramona has to apologize in front of the whole class. Ramona and several others feel this is unfair. Ramona is unhappy in school and feels that Mrs. Griggs does not like her.

Meanwhile, she moves into her new bedroom, but finds that she is afraid when she turns out the light. She does not tell anyone about being afraid. When progress reports come out, Beezus gets a wonderful report from Mr. Cardoza, whom she adores. Mrs. Griggs writes some good things in Ramona's report, but ends with comments about Ramona needing to use more self-control. Ramona gets very upset at the teacher's comments. But instead of telling her

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parents how she feels, she starts yelling at her sister. Her parents try to calm her down, but Ramona is so angry that she wants to do something bad to shock them all. She tells them she is going to say a bad word.

After she calms down, Ramona talks to her family about how hard it is to be misunderstood and laughed at when she is trying so hard. She does not feel that they love her. They reassure her and she feels better. The next day she decides to take a different route to school and runs into a big dog. She is afraid, so she throws her shoe at the dog so she can get away. Then she has to deal with being in school with one shoe. Ramona is surprised that Mrs. Griggs does not make a big deal about the missing shoe. Ramona makes a paper slipper and Mrs. Griggs tells her she did a nice job! Later the dog owner brings the shoe to school, and it is returned to Ramona. The school secretary tells Ramona she was very brave for standing up to the big dog.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why did Ramona think that her teacher did not like her?

Mrs. Griggs was a pleasant teacher who did the same things every year. When Ramona told the class that some men chopped a hole in her house, and the whole class laughed, Ramona felt that the teacher did not believe her. When Susan copied Ramona's paper-bag owl, and Ramona got upset and threw hers in the trash, Mrs. Griggs just thought Ramona did not make one. After Ramona crushed Susan's owl, Mrs. Griggs made Ramona apologize in front of the whole class. Ramona felt that someone who liked her would not humiliate her like that.

Literary Analysis

What should Ramona have done about her progress report instead of getting angry and saying mean things?

She should have told her parents how she felt and what had been happening at school. She was very hurt and angry because she thought that Mrs. Griggs had been unfair. She wanted to shock her family to get them to understand how upset she was. She wanted them to feel as hurt as she was feeling, but it did not work; they only laughed at her, which made it worse. After she calmed down and talked to her family about how unhappy she had been, they were able to help her feel better.

Constructing Meaning

What surprised Ramona when Beezus talked to her about when she was younger?

Ramona was surprised that her perfect sister could understand how Ramona felt. Beezus had been in Mrs. Griggs's class and remembered thinking it was boring and that the teacher often seemed unfair. She remembered when her parents laughed at things she did and how it made her feel. Being older, she could explain to her parents how she felt at the time, which helped them understand how Ramona was feeling.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Another story written from the point of view of a young girl is *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Discuss ways the characters Laura and Ramona are the same even though the settings are so completely different. Both girls feel as if their older sisters are perfect and that they cannot measure up to that standard. They both have special relationships with their fathers.

Understanding Characterization The story is written from the point of view of a six-year-old child. Ask the students to write about things they remember from first grade and how first grade differs from their current grade. Also they could write about things they did when they were

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younger than their parents or other adults thought was funny. Do they think it is funny now that they are older?

Understanding the Author's Craft The author does a really good job of telling the story from a child's point of view. Have the class illustrate favorite parts of the story. They will exaggerate the characters and the scene since Ramona saw things as larger than life. She is a girl with a vivid imagination. Some suggested scenes could be: the monsters under Ramona's bed, the Brick Factory game, Ramona's owl, or the big dog.

Comparing and Contrasting Have the class discuss how Howie is different from Ramona.. How are Ramona and Howie the same? Do Ramona and Beezus have anything in common? How are they different? List the characteristics in columns on the board and use that as a tool to lead the class discussion.