

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Ramona the Pest

by

### Beverly Cleary

### Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Ramona the Pest  
Quiz Number: 492  
Dell, 1982  
ISBN 0-440-47209-1; LCCN  
192 Pages  
Book Level: 5.1  
Interest Level: MG

A lovable five-year-old girl starts kindergarten with a hilarious series of misdeeds.

**Award:** SLJ Best Book; Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

**Topics:** Family Life, Growing Up; Humor/Funny, Funny; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Series, Ramona

### Main Characters

Beatrice (Beezus) Ramona's older sister  
Davy a classmate whom Ramona likes and wants to kiss  
Henry Huggins a patrol boy who saves Ramona  
Howie a neighbor and classmate of Ramona  
Miss Binney the kindergarten teacher  
Miss Mullen the principal  
Mr. Quimby Ramona's father  
Mrs. Kemp the mother of Howie and Willa Jean  
Mrs. Quimby Ramona's mother  
Mrs. Wilcox the substitute teacher  
Ramona Quimby the main character; a kindergarten girl who likes to learn and have fun but causes disturbances in the process  
Ribsy Henry's dog that comes to school  
Susan a girl in kindergarten with curls like springs  
Willa Jean Howie's baby sister, who is always sloppy

### Vocabulary

**ghastly** terrifying or horrible to the senses

**monitor** a student or other person appointed to help a teacher

**muck** dirt that is soft and moist

**subsided** to become quiet

**swarming** assembling in a crowd that moves as one

**truant officer** an official who investigates student absences from school

### Synopsis

Ramona Quimby is excited about her first day in kindergarten. Ramona's enthusiasm leads her sister, Beezus, to call her a pest, though Ramona does not consider herself to be a pest at all. Ramona and Mrs. Quimby set out to school, and they are joined by Mrs. Kemp and her children, Howie and Willa Jean. Howie is also beginning kindergarten.

At school Ramona and Howie meet their teacher, Miss Binney. Ramona also meets other students in the class including Susan, a girl whose curls make Ramona think of the word "boing," and Davy, whom Ramona decides she would like to kiss. Ramona gets off to a rough start her first day. She is unable to resist pulling one of Susan's curls during a game, and she causes a disturbance during rest time by pretending to snore. Ramona is disappointed by the day's end since she wanted to be good and to be loved by her new teacher.

Show and Tell is held the next day, and Ramona takes her favorite doll, Chevrolet. Howie, upset by forgetting a toy of his own, reluctantly takes Ramona's cat's toy rabbit. Conflict arises between Ramona and Howie when Miss Binney bestows a lovely red ribbon on the rabbit's neck. An argument for possession of the red ribbon occurs, but ends after Ramona compliments Howie on the mechanical ability he shows when he turns her tricycle into a two-wheeler.

As the school days continue, Ramona must learn to contend with "seat work" and doing things the correct way while causing the least possible disturbance. Despite Ramona's positive intentions,

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Ramona the Pest

by

### Beverly Cleary

---

she continues to cause disturbances regularly. One day Ramona discovers a substitute teacher is taking Miss Binney's place. Ramona decides to hide behind the trash cans rather than go into the classroom. Eventually she is discovered and is taken to the principal's office. Another morning Ramona happily wears her new red boots to school, but gets stuck in the mud while showing them off. Henry Huggins, the patrol boy, must rescue her after prompting from Miss Binney. On Halloween, Ramona, disguised in her witch costume, again pulls Susan's curls. Other children join in, driving Susan to tears and tattling.

Later in the school year, Ramona is delighted to finally have a loose tooth. Her tooth comes out at school, and she gives it to Miss Binney for safekeeping. But the tooth is forgotten when Susan accuses Ramona of being a pest, and Ramona responds by pulling Susan's curls. Ramona is sent home until she can stop pulling Susan's hair.

A few days later, Howie arrives at the Quimby home. He has an envelope for Ramona containing her tooth and a letter from her teacher asking when Ramona will come back to school. Ramona is delighted to see Miss Binney has written her Q's in Ramona's special way. Ramona informs her mother she is ready to return to school the next day, but Howie quickly reminds her the next day is Saturday.

### Open-Ended Questions

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

### Initial Understanding

Make a list of Miss Binney's kindergarten rules. Evaluate why or why not you think these rules are good for the children.

*Possible rules include: work quietly in your seat, raise your hand, keep your eyes to yourself, no hair pulling, share, take your turn, etc. Students should be able to give reasons how a rule is beneficial for the class as a whole, but may also note when a rule might need to be relaxed under special circumstances.*

### Literary Analysis

When Ramona is skipping and singing around the house, Beezus accuses her of being a pest, though Ramona insists she is no such thing. Why might younger children like Ramona sometimes be a little bit more bothersome and a little bit noisier than everyone else? Do you feel that children who do this are justified in making this noisy fuss?

*Sometimes Ramona and other children do not feel noticed and behave this way for attention, or they are letting out their excess energy. On the other hand, children cannot go through life having tantrums and bothering others. They must learn to control their actions and responses.*

### Inferential Comprehension

Ramona is excited about Halloween. Two customs Ramona enjoys are dressing up and going trick-or-treating. Do you think these activities are good for children or not? Why or why not?

*Halloween can provide a good family time together, a special time with friends, and amusement for older people or anyone who enjoys seeing children in their costumes. On the other hand, some religious groups dislike Halloween because it has pagan associations. Other people may feel trick-or-treating can lead to vandalism, and some people simply do not like trick or treaters at their door. The safety of children also can be an issue.*

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Ramona the Pest

by

### Beverly Cleary

---

#### Constructing Meaning

Ramona has a loose tooth, and she is able to remove the tooth in school. Can you remember when you, someone in your family, or a friend had a loose tooth? Tell a story about how the tooth came out and what happened to the tooth.

*Students' personal experiences will vary.*

any necessary materials for the class to play the game.

### Teachable Skills

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** Much of the story is about Ramona adapting to kindergarten. Look up the word kindergarten and trace its origin. Have students prepare a written or oral report telling things such as who started the concept, and when and where it was started. How did kindergarten grow to be an accepted part of the educational system today?

**Making Inferences** The story focuses on Ramona's thoughts and feelings during the course of events. Have the students choose one scene that takes place in the classroom and rewrite the scene from Miss Binney's point of view. Include her thoughts about the situation, and change the wording to reflect her views. Students should use information given in the story to reveal Miss Binney's viewpoint.

**Identifying Reading Strategies** Ramona misunderstands her teacher when Miss Binney says, "Sit here for the present." Younger children can be confused by words since some have more than one meaning. Another example of this is to "trim a hedge." An adult may cut the hedge to a desired height, but a child might actually take decorations and put them on the hedge as trim. Have the students make a chart of words that could be used more than one way. Give specific examples for various uses.

**Understanding Sequence** Miss Binney has her kindergarten students play various games. Have your students work in groups to invent a new game. Students can list the rules, state the objectives, and teach the class how to play, making sure the steps to be followed are in a logical order. Students must also bring to class