

## Book Club Questions – Ramona and her Father

### Discussion Questions:

1. What changes take place in the Quimby household when Mr. Quimby loses his job in the office of a van-and-storage company? Why does everyone (except Ramona) start to become a little grouchy?
2. Why does Ramona start to practice giggling, saying “Pop-pop-pop” and crunching loudly on food? Why does she tell her second grade teacher, Mrs. Rogers that her stockings are “wrinkled like an elephant’s legs?”
3. Why doesn’t Ramona want anyone to know how she got burrs stuck in her hair. How does she finally get them out?
4. Usually it’s Ramona who has temper tantrums, but when Picky-picky the cat eats part of the jack-o’-lantern for Halloween, Beezus starts an argument with her father. Why?
5. Mr. and Mrs. Quimby think that Ramona is just upset about the ruined jack-o’-lantern, but in fact she’s worried about something else. What? Do you think children worry about adults as much as adults worry about children?
6. What does Ramona do after she makes up her mind, in the middle of arithmetic, that she is going to save her father’s life? What are some of the signs that she and Beezus put around the house and where do they put them. What is Mr. Quimby’s reaction?
7. When Mr. Quimby isn’t at home waiting for her after school, Ramona is afraid he has gone away because she was mean to him. Does this turn out to be true?
8. Why do you think Mr. Quimby eventually decides to give up smoking? Is he immediately happy about his decision to quit? Why not?
9. Are the Quimbys a happy family? Are they a perfect family?

**Why did Mrs. Whaley say Ramona misunderstood what she said about being a nuisance.**

**What do you think is the hardest thing that Ramona has to get used to during the year?**

### **Ramona and Her Father**

- \_ Ramona makes a joyful noise—“Yeep.”**
- \_ Ramona makes herself a crown of burdock burrs that her father has to cut out of her hair.**
- \_ Ramona and Beezus campaign to make their father stop smoking.**
- \_ Ramona and Howie clank around the block on tin-can stilts singing, “Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall”—all the way from ninety-nine to one.**
- \_ Ramona is a black-nosed sheep in the church Christmas program.**

### **ACTIVITY**

Students make stilts with coffee cans and twine.

**Materials Needed:**

- Cleary, B. "Ramona and Her Father". Camelot 1990
- Two tin cans of the same size
- Two four-foot pieces of heavy twine
- large nail
- a hammer

**Activity: Steps:**

1. Have students scan Chapter 5 to find the part where it describes how to make the stilts.

Ask a volunteer to read the directions from the book aloud.

2. Help students pound nails into opposite sides near the bottom of each can to form holes

(Or have students watch while you make the holes. Parent volunteers would be helpful,

here.) Check to make sure there are no ragged edges on which students could cut themselves.

3. Thread the twine through the holes and knot the twine so that the knot is inside the can.

Pull the twine handle tight.

4. Take students to the playground where they can practice walking on their stilts.

Note: You might ask parents to help their children make the stilts at home.

Designate

a special time for students to bring their stilts to school for a stilt-stepping demonstration.

**Pretend you are selling this book to your classmates. You may choose to make a television commercial as Mrs. Whaley wanted Ramona to do and then perform it in front of the class.**

**Make a portrait of Ramona by drawing a picture of her in the middle of a large sheet of blank paper. Then decide on some words which describe Ramona, such as brave and spunky, and write them in the spaces around your picture.**

**Creative Writing**

In Ramona and Her Father, Beezus, who dreads creative writing because she does not believe she is imaginative, is relieved when the assignment is to "interview an old person and

ask questions about something they did when they were our age." The interviews written by Beezus's classmates will be compiled into a class book. Consider making this same assignment for your students.

Throughout the books, Mr. Quimby spouts wise sayings he learned from his grandmother. Encourage students to compile the wise sayings of Mr. Quimby's grandmother and discuss what they mean. Students might want to add some of their family sayings to the collection and then write some of their own.

## AUTHOR BIO

# Beverly Cleary

Beverly Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon, and, until she was old enough to attend school, lived on a farm in Yamhill, a town so small it had no library. Her mother arranged with the State Library to have books sent to Yamhill and acted as librarian in a lodge room upstairs over a bank. There young Beverly learned to love books. However, when the family moved to Portland, Beverly soon found herself in the grammar school's low reading circle, an experience that has given her sympathy for the problems of struggling readers.

By the third grade she had conquered reading and spent much of her childhood either with books or on her way to and from the public library. Before long her school librarian was suggesting that she should write for boys and girls when she grew up. The idea appealed to her, and she decided that someday she would write the books she longed to read but was unable to find on the library shelves, funny stories about her neighborhood and the sort of children she knew. And so Ramona Quimby, Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, and her other beloved characters were born.

When children ask Mrs. Cleary where she finds her ideas, she replies, "From my own experience and from the world around me." She included a passage about the D.E.A.R. program in *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* (second chapter) because she was inspired by letters she received from children who participated in "Drop Everything and Read" activities. Their interest and enthusiasm encouraged her to provide the same experience to Ramona, who enjoys D.E.A.R. time with the rest of her class.

Mrs. Cleary's books have earned her many prestigious awards, including the 2003 National Medal of Art from the National Endowment of the Arts and the 1984 John Newbery Medal for *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. Her *Ramona and Her Father* and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* were named 1978 and 1982 Newbery Honor Books, respectively.

Among Mrs. Cleary's other awards are the American Library Association's 1975 Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, the Catholic Library Association's 1980 Regina Medal, and the University of Southern Mississippi's 1982 Silver Medallion, all presented in recognition of her lasting contribution to children's literature. In addition, Mrs. Cleary was the 1984

United States author nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, a prestigious international award.

Equally important are the more than 35 statewide awards Mrs. Cleary's books have received based on the direct votes of her young readers. In 2000, to honor her invaluable contributions to children's literature, Beverly Cleary was named a "Living Legend" by the Library of Congress. This witty and warm author is truly an international favorite. Mrs. Cleary's books appear in over twenty countries in fourteen languages and her characters, including Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, Otis Spofford, and Beezus and Ramona Quimby, as well as Ribsby, Socks, and Ralph S. Mouse, have delighted children for generations. And her popularity has not diminished. HarperCollins Children's Books recently announced that the film option for Cleary's classic book character, Ramona Quimby, had been sold to Fox 2000 and Denise DiNovi Productions. In addition, Portland, Oregon has proudly created The Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden for Children featuring bronze statues of Ramona Quimby, Henry Huggins, and Ribsby, in the park where Beverly used to play.