

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Henry Huggins

by

## Beverly Cleary

### Book Information

Beverly Cleary, Henry Huggins

Quiz Number: 34

Dell, 1978

ISBN 0-440-43551-X; LCCN

155 Pages

Book Level: 4.7

Interest Level: MG

Third grader Henry Huggins acquires a flea-bitten but charming dog named Ribsby.

**Topics:** Humor/Funny, Funny; Series, Henry Huggins

### Main Characters

Beezus/Beatrice Ramona's older sister, so nicknamed by Ramona

Henry Huggins the main character in the story, a school-aged boy who gets in some predicaments, often with the help of his dog, Ribsby

Miss Roop Henry's schoolteacher

Mr. Huggins Henry's father, generally supportive of Henry's little projects

Mr. Pennycuff owner of the Lucky Dog Pet Shop

Mrs. Huggins Henry's mother, often corrects Henry's grammar

Ramona Henry's school friend and younger sister of Beezus

Ribsby mixed breed dog that Henry finds while getting ice cream

Robert a friendly schoolmate of Henry's

Scooter Henry's schoolmate who tends to brag a lot and tease Henry

### Vocabulary

**ick** short for ichthyophthirius, a sickness fish catch when they get chilled

**mongrel** a mixed-breed dog

**scowled** made a gloomy or irritated face

**seethe** to become agitated

### Synopsis

This book is composed of six stories about Henry

Huggins and his escapades after he finds Ribsby near the drugstore one day. The fun begins as Henry unsuccessfully attempts to take the dog home on the bus. A worried Mrs. Huggins calls the police who bring Henry and Ribsby home safe and sound.

Henry's responsible nature becomes evident as the story progresses through the many hilarious episodes. Henry attempts to raise guppies until the jars they are in fill his room, picks thousands of night crawlers to raise money to replace a lost football, plays a humiliating role in a Christmas operetta, enters Ribsby in an ill-fated dog show, and finally meets Ribsby's original owner.

Henry definitely has a knack for making mistakes, but he learns from the mistakes and in the end, when he is faced with losing Ribsby to his original owner, his inner character is revealed. Scooter devises a plan to see which boy Ribsby will choose, and Henry agrees to it even though he knows his dog might choose the other boy.

### Open-Ended Questions

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

#### Initial Understanding

Henry always seemed to get into trouble. What were some of the predicaments Henry had to handle? What could Henry have done differently?

*He had a difficult time trying to get Ribsby home on the bus. He threw Scooter's football into a passing car's window. He kept all the guppies as they multiplied.*

#### Literary Analysis

How did Ribsby change Henry's life?

*On the first page, Henry complained that nothing interesting happened to him until Ribsby came along. Ribsby got him out of playing the little boy. Ribsby brought joy to Henry and the neighborhood kids.*

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### Inferential Comprehension

How did the author show Henry was a responsible boy?

*Henry earned an allowance. Henry saved his money and knew its value. Henry owned up to his mistakes. Henry took good care of Ribsby. Henry worked hard to take care of the guppies. He also was very clever in ways to raise money, especially to replace the football.*

### Constructing Meaning

How did the story show Henry was a lucky boy?

*He turned misfortune into fortune. The green paint on his head prevented him from playing Timmy. The pink powder earned Ribsby an award instead of disqualifying him from the competition.*

In it, the dogs are judged, and then they progress through the rounds. For a project, have students research how dog shows and competitions are run. Some famous competitions are the Westminster Dog Show and the Eukanuba Cup. Have them learn about judging standards, as well as the differences between show and obedience competition. Another idea, considering Ribsby is a mixed breed, would be to learn about such groups as A.M.B.O.R (American Mixed Breeds Obedience Registry), which offers competition and titles for mixed breeds.

## Teachable Skills

**Understanding Literary Features** One idea that is repeated throughout the book is taking responsibility for one's actions. Henry is very sincere about his responsibility to others, as well as correcting his mistakes. He is especially resourceful in earning money for that football. Have students discuss what it means to be responsible. Ask them if they damaged or lost someone's property, how would they handle it? They can role-play with other students, each pretending to be the one who lost something, or the one whose object was lost. Have them brainstorm ideas on how to replace the lost or damaged item.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** This story is written in the third person, but the thoughts of the dog are not made clear. For a writing assignment, have students re-write the section of "Henry and Ribs" where Henry first encounters the dog. Write about how the dog ended up on that particular street, as well as why Ribsby chose Henry to be his new owner. What did Ribsby think when he first saw Henry?

**Describing Actions or Events** In "The Pale Pink Dog," Henry prepares Ribsby for a local dog show.