

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 Study Guide

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 by Beverly Cleary

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Plot Summary

Ramona Quimby, Age 8, is a story of a young third-grader's experiences as she starts a new school year at a new school and deals with family stresses. Ramona endures some embarrassing episodes at school and learns to address a misunderstanding she has with her teacher. At home, Ramona observes the strain that financial concerns are placing on her family but affirms that they are still a happy family.

The story is told from Ramona's point of view, with sympathy for the confusion she sometimes experiences when she does not fully understand what she sees and hears. The author also acknowledges that events that might seem trivial to an adult may be extremely important to a child. When Ramona's mother mistakenly puts a raw egg in her lunch box instead of the hard-boiled egg she is expecting, Ramona ends up with egg in her hair from cracking the shell on her head. She overhears her teacher say "What a nuisance", and mistakenly believes the remark to be about her personally.

Ramona spends the next several weeks of school trying not to be a nuisance to her teacher. The result is that when she is truly sick one day she puts off saying anything until it is too late and she throws up in class, causing her further embarrassment. In the end, Ramona gathers the courage to talk to her teacher about the remark and learns that it was not about her, but about the nuisance of getting egg out of hair.

On her first day, Ramona is teased by a boy in her class. She stands up to the boy and responds with some remarks of her own. She soon comes to feel that the boy possibly likes her and realizes she likes him, as well.

At home, Ramona's father has quit his full time job to return to school and her mother has taken a job. After school, she goes to a neighbor's house until her parents come home, which is a new experience for her, and she resents being expected to play with much younger children. Her parents are watching their money closely and Ramona notices that they are eating less expensive foods and that she and her sister are asked to share in more housekeeping chores. She observes her parents' concern when their car needs a major repair. She shares in their worries even though she does not completely understand them. The tension sometimes leads to quarreling among the family members, but the story ends on a positive note as they all enjoy a rare meal out at a restaurant and Ramona confirms that they are all happy together.



The First Day of School

The First Day of School Summary

The first chapter opens as Ramona Quimby is preparing for her first day in the third grade. She is excited at the prospect of riding the bus to school for the first time, feeling it is a privilege. She teases her older sister, Beezus, who has to walk to her school. Ramona is dreading the "little talking-to" she expects her parents are likely to give her about behaving properly. She is feeling grown up because of the bus ride and does not wish to be talked to like a child who has to be reminded to behave.

Ramona's parents are also preparing for their days. Her mother is dressed in a white uniform for her job as a receptionist at a doctor's office. Her father is also going to school, having recently quit his full time job as a supermarket checker to return to college to become a teacher. The mood is happy and optimistic. As the girls are leaving the house, their father hands each of them a new pink eraser, a small gift for their first day of school. Ramona is pleased to get the eraser, partly because even small gifts have been infrequent since her parents have had to start watching their finances carefully to afford her father's return to school.

As Ramona's mother gives her the sack lunch she will take to school she starts in with the "talking-to" that Ramona has been expecting. She reminds Ramona to play nicely with Willa Jean, the young girl of the neighbor's where Ramona will be going after school each day.

Ramona walks to the bus stop and proudly boards the bus. She sits where she is told by the bus monitor, in front of a boy in a baseball cap who kicks at the back of her seat. She has the urge to call him a name, but tells herself that a grown-up would not do that and so sits quietly. When the bus monitor tells the boy to stop, she learns his name is Danny.

Ramona is enjoying the bus ride until she notices her pink eraser is missing. She asks another girl if she has seen it, and Danny asks if it was a pink eraser. When Ramona asks him if he has found it he smirks and says he has not. Ramona is outraged and calls him a liar. When they reach the school, Ramona is pleased to find that the third graders are the oldest children at the new school and she feels especially grown up watching the smaller kids. She does feel somewhat self-conscious of her size, however, noticing that her feet look large in the new sandals she is wearing.

While walking in to school, Danny pulls out a pink eraser and starts playing catch with it with another boy. Ramona yells at them to give it back, but Danny keeps it. Once in her new classroom she finds Danny is in her class. As she is passing out papers at the request of Mrs. Whaley, her teacher, she whispers to Danny to give her back her eraser. "Try and get it, Bigfoot," he replies (p. 24). Ramona quickly retorts "Superfoot, to you, Yard Ape". To her surprise, Danny gives the eraser back with a grin. Ramona is proud



for having stood up to him and thinks she may like him. She also likes her new teacher and is optimistic about the third grade, proudly writing her full name and age at the top of her papers, complete with fancy decorations.

The First Day of School Analysis

All of the main characters are introduced in the first chapter. Ramona is an eight-year-old girl who is proud of the extra responsibility that comes with her advancing age. She is a thoughtful child who tries to do the right things but is also impulsive and sometimes cannot help herself.

The groundwork is laid for the one of the central themes of the story, the strains that Ramona's family undergo when her father quits his full time job to return to school. This has caused some changes in Ramona's daily routine. She now goes to a babysitter after school because her mother has taken a job.

Ramona's classroom situation is established. She likes her new teacher, Mrs. Whaley, but a conflict will develop later in the book. The episode with Ramona's squeaky shoes provides an foreshadowing of the kind of situation Ramona often finds herself in where she cannot seem to avoid causing a disruption, despite her best efforts.



At Howie's House

At Howie's House Summary

It is another morning and Ramona's mother reminds her to be nice to Willa Jean after school. Ramona is tired of being reminded every day, and tells her mother so. Her mother is understanding and says she knows Ramona is trying. Having to go to Howie Kemp's house after school every day is one of the bad things about third grade, Ramona decides. Another bad thing is that her father is often tired from working a part time job at night and going to classes and studying during the day.

There are good things about third grade, too, she decides, and one of them is called "Sustained Silent Reading". This is a time every day at school when the students sit and read whatever book they like. It is Ramona's favorite part of the day, and she likes that Sustained Silent Reading sounds very important.

On this particular day, Ramona goes to Howie Kemp's after school as usual to be watched by Mrs. Kemp, Howie's grandmother. Howie has a bicycle and goes off to ride with some other boys, leaving Ramona with Willa Jean, who is five. Mrs. Kemp expects Ramona to entertain Willa Jean, which Ramona resents. Another young boy comes to the house and for a time Ramona plays dress up and pretend games with them, not enjoying herself especially. When her sister Beezus arrives at the house after school, Willa Jean tries to get her to join in the game, but Beezus announces she cannot because she has homework to do. Ramona takes the cue and tells Willa Jean she has to do some Sustained Silent Reading. This sounds impressive to Willa Jean, and Mrs. Kemp seems to think it is important, too. Ramona and Beezus catch one another's eye and smile, knowing they have been clever in avoiding having to play with Willa Jean. Ramona happily loses herself in her book.

At Howie's House Analysis

Later in the story, it is mentioned by Mrs. Quimby that getting along with Willa Jean is Ramona's "job" in the family. Ramona's struggle to find common ground with the pre-school age Willa Jean establishes Ramona's character as being at a transitional age. She has a longer attention span and enjoys solitary activities like reading to herself. She does still somewhat enjoy the pretend games that Willa Jean prefers, however. She looks up to her older sister, who is enough older than Willa Jean that she is not expected to play with her. Ramona looks forward to the day when adults will treat her as less of a child.



The Hard-boiled Egg Fad

The Hard-boiled Egg Fad Summary

Mornings at Ramona's house are busy, with each of the four members of her family leaving at different times and going in different directions. Ramona is usually the third to leave, before her mother, and has a few minutes alone with her each day. On this morning, she asks her mother if she remembered to put a hard-boiled eggs in her lunch.

A fad has started among the third graders to have a hard-boiled egg with their lunch. Even though Ramona prefers deviled eggs, she asks for a hard-boiled egg, too, because like her classmates, she likes to crack the eggs in funny ways at lunch.

In class, each student in Ramona's class is given a jar with fruit fly eggs in it for a science project. Ramona makes a fancy label for her jar and is pleased when Mrs. Whaley praises her for it. At lunch, the third graders save their eggs for last. Ramona's preferred method is to smack the egg hard against her head, but when she does this with her egg, she is surprised to find her mother has mistakenly put a raw egg in her lunch and it oozes into her hair and onto her face.

Ramona is embarrassed and angry. When another girl offers to help her, she rudely tells her to go away, not wanting to be treated like a little girl. The lunch monitor comes over and tells Ramona to go to the office to get cleaned up.

The woman in the office, Mrs. Larson, is sympathetic and leads Ramona into a side room with a cot and a sink where she helps her wash the egg out as much as possible. She gives Ramona some paper towels and tells her to get as much out of her hair as she can.

Mrs. Larson leaves Ramona in the small room and goes back to her desk. From the little room, Ramona can hear teachers coming in to the office and chatting with Mrs. Larson. She is interested to hear them talking about their classes. She hears Mrs. Whaley chatting with Mrs. Larson and overhears her say "I hear my little show-off came in with egg in her hair" and then, "What a nuisance".

Ramona is stunned. She does not feel she has been a nuisance, as the egg incident was not her fault. Her feelings are hurt that her teacher would think she is a nuisance. She sits quietly even after the lunch period ends, dreading going back to class and facing Mrs. Whaley.

After Ramona has been sitting quietly for a while, she hears Danny come in to the office and tell Mrs. Larson that Ramona has not come back from lunch. Mrs. Larson is surprised that she has forgotten Ramona and hurries her along. As they walk back to class, Ramona tells Danny that Mrs. Whaley does not like her. He tries to cheer her up, and she does feel better when he is nice to her, but as they enter the classroom he turns and teases her by calling her "Egghead".



The class is learning to make cursive capital Qs. Ramona avoids looking at Mrs. Whaley and follows the directions. She dislikes the cursive Q, which is the first letter in her last name. She tells herself she will never write capital Qs in cursive and that Mrs. Whaley can never make her. This makes her feel a little better.

The Hard-boiled Egg Fad Analysis

Ramona's tension with her teacher is a central theme of the story, and it is established in this chapter. While she is stunned when she thinks her teacher has made a critical personal remark, Ramona is indignant at the same time. She feels the egg incident was an accident and does not understand why she should be considered a nuisance over it. Ramona's private refusal to use cursive Qs in her name is another sign of her personality.

The tension with Mrs. Whaley will be resolved later in the story when Ramona summons the personal strength to confront her teacher about the remarks she made.



The Quimbys' Quarrel

The Quimbys' Quarrel Summary

As the fourth chapter opens, it is Saturday and Ramona is upset with her mother over the raw egg episode. Mrs. Quimby repeats again that she is sorry for the mistake. Ramona has already forgiven her, but continues to press the matter because she is feeling generally cross. Her mother is exasperated as she goes about doing laundry. Ramona's older sister, Beezus, is in a bad mood because she has been up late the night before staying at a friend's house and has not had enough sleep.

Mr. Quimby is completing a drawing exercise to draw his own foot, and is frustrated at the results. Ramona joins him and her bad mood lifts temporarily while she works on drawing her own foot. She is disappointed to see that her father's drawing is not very good. He himself acknowledges that her own drawing is probably better.

At dinner, Ramona feels like complaining again. She says she wishes they were having cornbread, and sniffs at her food. Her mother has served what she thinks is pot roast with gravy over it. She tastes it and likes it, but then her sister realizes it is not pot roast but tongue. The girls refuse to eat any more, even though they had been enjoying it before they knew what it was. Mr. and Mrs. Quimby are frustrated. Mrs. Quimby tells them they are having tongue because it is cheaper and nutritious.

At the end of the meal, Mr. Quimby announces that the girls will be preparing supper the next day. Beezus protests that she planned to go to a friend's house, but her father tells her she will have to cancel. When Ramona says she does not know how to cook, he tells her if she can read a recipe, she can cook. The girls resign themselves to their punishment. Ramona goes to her room to read, hoping her parents' mood will improve, and planning to be on her best behavior in the hope that they might forget the punishment.

The Quimbys' Quarrel Analysis

Ramona is aware of her own emotions and motivations, and accurately assess her own bad mood over the raw egg episode. She understands it was a mistake, and has even forgiven her mother, but her grumpiness over the remarks of her teacher are causing her to press the issue with her mother because she simply feels like being cross.

Her intentional bad mood has consequences, however, and results in Ramona and Beezus being assigned the task of preparing Sunday supper for the family. Her outlook is still simple enough that she hopes she can undo the punishment by being extra good, and the implication is that perhaps her parents have forgotten to follow through on similar punishments in the past.

The growing tension in the Quimby household is developed further in this chapter. This tension is a primary worry for Ramona, and will be resolved in the final chapter.



The Extra-good Sunday

The Extra-good Sunday Summary

On Sunday morning, Ramona and Beezus get up without having to be called and clean their rooms without being told. They are trying to be extra good in the hopes their parents will forget that they have been told to prepare supper that evening. Everyone seems to be in a better mood, Ramona notices. Her father returns to his foot drawing exercise and Beezus reads quietly in her room. Nobody says anything about supper.

It has been raining, and Ramona looks outside, waiting for the sidewalks to dry enough for her to go outside and roller skate. When the walks are dry in the late afternoon, she says to her father she thinks she'll go outside. He asks her if she has forgotten that she is supposed to be preparing supper for the family. He has remembered after all. Ramona glumly tells Beezus they can stop being so good.

The girls close themselves off in the kitchen and talk about what to make. They briefly discuss making the meal awful on purpose, but decide against it because they would have to eat it, too. They take what they can find in the refrigerator and concoct a recipe for a sauce to put over some chicken thighs. Ramona starts to make cornbread but finds she is short on the ingredients. She makes some substitutions and puts it in the oven with the chicken. The girls create a large mess and find it difficult to get all the dishes prepared at once. Ramona hurriedly set the table with some mismatched candles and they present their meal.

Mr. and Mrs. Quimby are somewhat surprised to find the meal is tasty. Beezus and Ramona smile to each other. The mood is light and pleasant and Ramona feels like she can stop being cross with her mother about the egg incident. Mr. Quimby says he enjoyed the meal so much he will do the dishes and Mrs. Quimby says she will help. The girls smile again, knowing what a mess they have left in the kitchen.

The Extra-good Sunday Analysis

The fifth chapter describes Ramona and Beezus being extra well behaved in the hope that they might escape the punishment of having to cook the Sunday supper for the family. They are unsuccessful, however, and take to the task grudgingly. The girls prove to be resourceful, if messy cooks. Despite a few humorous ingredient substitutions, the girls prepare a tasty meal for their parents. The tension in the family is relieved temporarily.



Supernuisance

Supernuisance Summary

It is another school morning and Ramona picks at her breakfast, not feeling hungry. She is pleased that her family seems to be getting along once more but does not look forward to school except for Sustained Silent Reading and the bus ride. She is constantly worried her teacher will think she is being a nuisance.

As her father is leaving for class, he has trouble getting the family car in gear. He and Mrs. Quimby push it into the street and try to get it moving, but it will not go into reverse gear. Mrs. Quimby says she will take it to the mechanic and be late for work while Mr. Quimby gets to class. Ramona heads off to the bus stop.

On the bus, Ramona does not respond when Danny teases her. At school, she feels very tired and has trouble concentrating on her work. She thinks she should probably tell Mrs. Whaley that she does not feel well, but is afraid she will think she is being a nuisance. She has a wave of nausea and knows she should say something, but instead puts her head down and hopes it will go away. It does not, and before Ramona can say or do anything, she has thrown up on the floor.

The class is disrupted. Mrs. Whaley sends them into the hall to escape the bad smell and has another girl take Ramona to the office. Ramona feels embarrassed for throwing up in front of the class, and feels she really is a nuisance to Mrs. Whaley.

In the office, Mrs. Larson has Ramona lie down on the cot in the same little room where she washed the eggs from her hair. She tells her she will call her mother to come get her, and Ramona replies that her mother is at work and her father in class. Mrs. Larson tells her not to worry. Ramona throws up once again and puts her head down on the cot. She wakes up after a bit to her mother's voice telling her she has come to take her home. Ramona is glad to see her mother but is worried at the same time that she will lose her job for having to come and get her.

The family car is in the repair shop, so Ramona rides home with her mother in a taxi. At any other time, she would feel important to ride in a taxi, she thinks to herself, but feels too awful to be proud. At home, Ramona thinks back about what happened at school and starts to cry. Her mother comforts her, but gently scolds her for not telling Mrs. Whaley she was feeling sick. This makes Ramona feel even worse because she cannot tell her mother about trying not to be a nuisance. As she drifts off to sleep, she decides she is a "supernuisance."

Supernuisance Analysis

In the chapter "Supernuisance", the events of the story come to a peak. Ramona, concerned about being a nuisance to her teacher, does not tell anyone about her illness



and throws up in class. This is extremely embarrassing to her, and increases her anxiety about bothering her teacher. Ramona's changing family situation, which is the other main source of her anxiety, heightens when the family car needs a major repair that further strains the family's financial situation. Ramona is worried that her mother may lose her job for leaving work to get her from school. She is convinced that her teacher will think she is an even bigger nuisance than before. She is at a low spot.



The Patient

The Patient Summary

Ramona wakes up the next morning to a quiet house. At first she thinks her family has left her alone, but when she hears someone moving in the kitchen, she assumes Mrs. Kemp has come over to watch her. She is surprised when it is her mother who comes into her room. She is worried that her mother has not gone to work and that she will lose her job. Her mother reassures her that someone has filled in for her.

Ramona stays home from school and watches television. She is amused by the commercials, but when she sees a cat food commercial with a cat eating dry food without making any crunching sounds, she realizes the commercials are lying. This makes her cranky. She is feeling a little better than the day before, and her mood brightens when a girl from her class comes by in the afternoon and delivers a packet of letters her class has written to her wishing her to get well soon. The girl also brings Ramona a book and tells her the class has an assignment to give an oral book report as if they are trying to sell the book to the rest of the class.

Beezus comes home from school and Ramona proudly shows her the letters she received. Beezus remarks that the students just copied them off the blackboard as a handwriting assignment, which makes Ramona a little sad. She notes that the letter from Danny says something different, however. He has written "Dear Superfoot, Get well or I will eat your eraser." This pleases Ramona.

Ramona's father is late coming home and she assumes it is because he has stopped to buy her a present. When he finally arrives he has no present for her, and he announces the car will need an expensive repair. Ramona is grumpy about the present and also concerned about her parents, who seem worried about the extra expense of the car repair.

The Patient Analysis

Ramona begins to bounce back from her low point as the final third of the book begins with the seventh chapter. She still feels ill, but is improving. Her day spent watching television commercials will provide her with inspiration for the book report assignment she receives from Mrs. Whaley. Her day at home also provides her some encouragement in the form of a packet of letters written by her classmates wishing her a quick recovery. She is heartened by the note from Mrs. Whaley that says she misses Ramona. Small things like this are meaningful to Ramona, and she is upset when her older sister belittles the gesture, pointing out the children were made to write the letters as a handwriting assignment. The book report assignment establishes one of the main events in the story that will lead to the resolution of Ramona's anxiety.



Ramona's Book Report

Ramona's Book Report Summary

Everyone in the Quimby family seems to be worried as the eighth chapter opens. Ramona's parents are worried about money, Beezus is worried about an upcoming party where boys will be attending, and Ramona is worried about her book report. The book she has been assigned is called "Left-Behind Cat" which she finds "medium boring."

Ramona asks her father for advice on how to "sell" the book. He suggests that she ought to have some idea from watching so many television commercials. She mentions to him that she does not want to look like a show off or be a nuisance with her report. When her father asks her why she would be worried about such a thing, she tells him about the squeaky shoes, the egg in her hair and throwing up in class. He replies that none of these things were Ramona's fault, and she cannot be considered a nuisance for them. She is pleased that he seems to agree with her own opinion, and decides she is right. She resolves to make her report any way she likes.

Her father's remark about the television commercials starts Ramona thinking about the many cat-food commercials she has seen, and she gets a sudden idea. She makes up three paper cat masks and calls two friends to ask for their help giving her report. She writes down what she plans to say and starts to memorize it.

Ramona is also worried about her parents at the opening of the chapter. When Beezus notices that Mr. Quimby's hair is thinning on top, Mrs. Quimby and Ramona come to investigate. Mrs. Quimby agrees that it is getting thin, and gives him a kiss on his head. He teases her lightly about starting to get gray hair and gives her a playful pat on the bottom. Ramona is happy to see them being affectionate with each other. She knows other families where the parents have split up, and it is something that she wonders about.

At school the next day, Ramona is the last student before lunch to give her report. She and her two friends put on their cat masks, and while her friends dance in the background like some cats Ramona has seen in a commercial, she makes a television-style pitch for the book with phrases like "Left-Behind Cat gives kids something to smile about!" The class is giggling, and Ramona starts to giggle, too. She sees that Danny has a big grin on his face and she feels a little flustered. She cannot remember what she planned to say next. She blurts out the only thing she can think of, based on a line from a commercial about a product for indigestion, "I can't believe I read the whole thing!"

The class erupts in laughter, including Mrs. Whaley, who thanks Ramona for her entertaining book report. The class breaks for lunch, but Ramona remains behind for a moment, feeling emboldened by the mask she is wearing. She tells Mrs. Whaley that



although she may think Ramona is a nuisance, Ramona does not think she is. Mrs. Whaley is taken aback. She does not remember the remarks that Ramona refers to, but when Ramona explains further she recalls them. She said that she did call her a show-off, but meant it affectionately. The remark "what a nuisance" was in reference to getting the egg out of Ramona's hair, not about Ramona personally. Ramona is happy with this explanation and skips off to lunch.

Ramona's Book Report Analysis

The tension in Ramona's family continues to build up to the final resolution in the last chapter, but Ramona observes that despite their worries her parents still show signs of affection.

Ramona worries about her book report, wavering between doing something safe that will not be very interesting and doing something bolder that might risk her teacher thinking she is a nuisance. She expresses her worry to her father, who confirms that she is not really a nuisance because of events she cannot control. Emboldened by the support of her father, Ramona resolves to do the book report in the way she most wants to.

Her book report is a success, and gives her the courage to confront Mrs. Whaley about the remarks she made in the office. Mrs. Whaley's explanation satisfies Ramona for the most part, and resolves one of the central themes of the story, Ramona's misunderstanding of her remarks.



Rainy Sunday

Rainy Sunday Summary

It is a rainy Sunday afternoon at the Quimby house and Ramona is sullen. Mr. Quimby is studying and in a short mood. Mrs. Quimby asks Ramona several times to clean her room, but Ramona daydreams at the window until her mother gets angry. Mr. Quimby repeats her insistence that Ramona start cleaning her room right away. Sulking, Ramona goes to her room. As she passes Beezus' room, she overhears her arguing with her mother who has told her she cannot go to a friend's house.

Mrs. Quimby is in a bad mood. She and Mr. Quimby snip at one another over the cold air that gets in when she lets out the cat. She scolds Ramona again for not playing with Willa Jean as nicely as she could after school. Ramona sighs deeply. Willa Jean has finally figured out that Sustained Silent Reading is just Ramona reading to herself. Ramona has tried to find other ways to entertain her, but resents having to take care of the young girl.

Ramona speaks with her father, who is studying. She asks him what he is reading about, and is worried when he says he is reading about how children think. She does not want him knowing how she thinks, and she is comforted when he playfully tells her nobody could figure out how she thinks.

Mrs. Quimby sits at the table with a stack of bills and the checkbook. Beezus comes out of her room, her eyes red from tears. Ramona sits on the couch, looking out at the cold and gray day. Suddenly her father slams his book shut and tells everyone to get cleaned up because they are going out to eat for a family dinner. Mrs. Quimby holds up the checkbook to remind him of the expense, but he replies he will be working extra hours at his part time job, and that he wants them to have a happy family meal. He asks the girls where they want to go and they choose a restaurant called "Whopperburger".

The family gets ready to go out, and they drive to the restaurant in the repaired car. It is crowded and they have to wait to get a table. Ramona wanders around the front of the restaurant while they wait and meets an older man who speaks to her kindly. He gives her a salute and asks her if she has been good to her mother. Ramona is confused and looks to her parents for a cue about what to say. They are looking back at her, amused, waiting to hear her response. She turns back and scowls at the man, deciding it is a somewhat personal question and that he cannot make her answer if she does not want to. Just then, the family is called to be seated.

Ramona asks if she can order from the adult menu and her parents agree. The hamburger she orders is delicious, but she cannot eat all of it. She and her sister start to quarrel, but stop short on a look from their parents. Nearby, Ramona sees the old man who spoke to her earlier sitting alone and eating a steak. She watches the man and sees him speaking seriously to his waitress, who then goes and speaks with the



restaurant manager. Ramona wonders if the man does not have enough money to pay his bill, but sees that he leaves a tip on the table. As he is leaving, he turns and gives her another salute.

Ramona turns back to her family, who are now relaxed and smiling. She asks her father if he is going to quit his classes. Earlier he had wondered aloud why he was bothering with them when there were bills to pay. He reassures her that he is not going to quit. After a bit, the waitress comes to the table and Mr. Quimby asks for the check. The waitress is slightly embarrassed and tells him that the check has already been covered by the older man who had just left. Mrs. Quimby wonders aloud why he would do that, and the waitress replies that he said it was because they looked like a nice, happy family and because he missed his own children and grandchildren.

The Quimby family are grateful, and slightly amused that they would appear to a stranger to be such a nice family, all knowing how grumpy they had been earlier. They discuss it and decide that they really are a happy family. As they ride home in the car, Ramona feels happy and decides she will try reading out loud to Willa Jean to entertain her the next day after school. She decides that she likes some things about Mrs. Whaley, and dislikes other things, and will try to get along with her. She reflects that the family meal was a happy ending to that rainy Sunday, but tells herself that the next day everything will start all over again.

Rainy Sunday Analysis

With Ramona's school issues apparently resolved, the other major theme of the story is left to be concluded in the final chapter. The mood at the Quimby household has reached a low. Beezus and Ramona are upset and their parents are impatient. Ramona is worried when her father seems on the verge of giving up his plan to become a teacher. Mrs. Quimby scolds Ramona for not cleaning her room and not playing with Willa Jean as she is expected to do. When Ramona sighs and relents, Mrs. Quimby softens and recognizes the difficulty her daughter is having.

The mood changes quickly when Mr. Quimby has had enough. He proposes a treat for the whole family, insisting that they all must get along. It is enough to lift their spirits, although Ramona and Beezus have to try hard not to bicker when they get to the restaurant.

The stranger who secretly buys the Quimbys' meal for them provides an opportunity for the family to take an objective look at themselves. They are surprised that they would appear to a stranger to be a nice happy family when they know that earlier in the day they had all been quarreling. The gesture by the old man leads to the conclusion that they really are happy with each other, despite their present concerns and strains.

The book ends on a somewhat bittersweet note. The day has ended happily, Ramona agrees, but she reminds herself that the next day may be completely different. The

overall tone to the ending is optimistic, however, as Ramona's main problems have been addressed and resolved.



Characters

Ramona Quimby

Ramona Quimby is the younger of two daughters in the Quimby family. She is eight years old and in the third grade at Cedarhurst Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. She is proud of her age, and seeks to act like a "grown-up" whenever possible. She resents being treated like a child at times, particularly when she is expected to play with or entertain younger children.

Ramona is a bright and creative girl. She is good at drawing and enjoys reading. She has an unlucky tendency to be involved in minor accidents that draw attention to her, and for which she feels she is often blamed. She tries to avoid these situations, but her efforts are sometimes frustrated by her bad luck. She is eager to please her teacher, but also indignant when she thinks her teacher is treating her unfairly.

Ramona is an observant person, noticing small details of her surroundings and the people she interacts with. She insists on "accuracy" from others, and will correct people when she thinks they are exaggerating. She has a critical eye of television advertising and is bothered by what she thinks are "lies" about the products they represent.

Mr. Quimby

Mr. Quimby is the father of Ramona. He has recently left his full time job as a supermarket checker and taken a part time job at a frozen foods warehouse while he returns to college to get a teaching degree. He spends much of his time attending classes and studying at home. He is perhaps in his thirties, and his hair is beginning to thin on top. He has a playful sense of humor, but is sometimes short and slightly sarcastic. He sometimes questions his decision to go back to school, particularly when the financial strain of his lower income affects the family.

Mr. Quimby wants his family to be happy and harmonious, and tries to cheer them all up when the mood gets down. He is impulsive at times, rounding up the family for a meal at a restaurant even when money is tight. He is affectionate toward his wife and understanding with his daughters.

Mrs. Quimby

Mrs. Quimby, whose first name is Dorothy, is Ramona's mother. She formerly stayed home as a homemaker, but has recently taken a job as a receptionist in a doctor's office while her husband goes back to school. She is very busy and sometimes distracted. She handles the family's finances and tries to save money by purchasing food that is on special, but also worries about keeping her family well-fed. She is a caring mother, but



sometimes loses her temper with her daughters when they are being difficult or not listening to her.

Beezus

Beezus is Ramona's older sister. She attend junior high school and considers herself to be much more mature than Ramona. She sometimes speaks down to Ramona about her experiences in third grade. Beezus is developing a social life and is starting to worry about boys.

Mrs. Whaley

Mrs. Whaley is Ramona's third grade teacher at Cedarhurst Elementary. She has a relaxed teaching style and is not strict about students raising their hands before speaking. She encourages Ramona's creativity in class, but also thinks that Ramona has a tendency to show off sometimes. Ramona likes Mrs. Whaley for the most part.

Danny

Danny is a boy in Ramona's class who also rides the bus with her each day. On the first day of school, he steals Ramona's eraser and teases her, but when she stands up to him he returns it. Ramona gives him the nickname "Yard Ape" and in return he calls her "Bigfoot" and "Egghead". Despite the teasing, Ramona likes Danny and understands that he probably likes her, too.

Willa Jean Kemp

Willa Jean is the pre-school age girl who lives at the house where Ramona goes after school to be watched by Mrs. Kemp, Willa Jean's grandmother. Willa Jean likes to play with Ramona, but Ramona has grown past the pretend games that Willa Jean prefers. Ramona tries various approaches to getting out of having to entertain the girl.

Howie Kemp

Howie is a boy of Ramona's age who lives near her. Ramona goes to Howie's house after school, but he spends his time riding his bicycle with other boys. Ramona has no bicycle. Howie is a kind boy and sometimes lets Ramona ride his bike.

Mrs. Kemp

Mrs. Kemp is the grandmother of Howie and Willa Jean. She watches Ramona and Beezus after school until their parents come home. She favors her own grandchildren and expects Ramona to entertain Willa Jean while she is at the Kemp house.

The Man at the Restaurant

The unnamed older man at the restaurant is kindly toward Ramona, even when Ramona is suspicious when he asks if she has been kind to her mother. He is apparently lonely and enjoys seeing the Quimby family having a nice meal together, prompting him to pay for their meal.

Mrs. Larson

Mrs. Larson is a pleasant woman who works in the office at Cedarhurst Elementary. She comforts Ramona when she comes to the office first with egg in her hair and then when Ramona is sick in class.



Objects/Places

The Quimby Home

The Quimbys live in a two-story house in a residential neighborhood of Portland, Oregon.

Cedarhurst School

The school where Ramona attends third grade. The school houses first through third grade and is a two-story brick building that has views of Mt. Hood, a mountain near Portland.

Mrs. Whaley's Classroom

Where Ramona attends class. There are twenty-five students in her class, each with a separate desk.

The Kemp Home

A house near the Quimby house where Ramona and her sister go after school until their parents come home.

Whopperburger

A popular restaurant that is a favorite of Ramona and Beezus. The Quimby family goes out to dinner at the Whopperburger near the end of the book.

The School Office

The administrative office of Cedarhurst Elementary, where Ramona is sent after getting egg in her hair and when she gets sick in class. There is a small room in the office with a cot and sink where Ramona gets cleaned up and rests.

Portland, Oregon

The city where Ramona and her family live.



Bigfoot

A mythical creature that is purported to live in the forests of Oregon. Ramona is given the nickname "Bigfoot" by a boy in her class after an incident where her squeaky new sandals disrupt the class.

The School Bus

Ramona rides a school bus every morning along with Danny, a boy in her class who teases her.

The Lunch Room

The scene of Ramona's incident with the raw egg. The lunch room is a social place for Ramona and her classmates, and she looks forward to the lunch period every day.



Themes

Family pressures from a young girl's perspective

Ramona's family is like many in that both parents work. Her father is attending school to become a teacher and is holding two part time jobs. Her mother works as a receptionist. They are paying close attention to their finances in order to make ends meet, and while Ramona does not understand the full details of the family's financial situation, she recognizes the practical effects on their lives. Her mother serves less expensive cuts of meat at dinner, for example, and the family does not go out to eat as often as it once did.

Sensing the importance of their finances to her parents, Ramona worries about them and their jobs. Her father worked as a supermarket checker but has quit to work in a frozen food warehouse where Ramona is afraid he may freeze. When Ramona becomes sick at school and her mother misses work, she has the added worry that her mother will lose her job for taking time off. While Ramona's fears may seem exaggerated from an adult's standpoint, the author is careful to demonstrate that they are very real to the eight-year-old Ramona.

Ramona finding her place

Ramona is proud to be eight years old, writing her age on her school papers as if to show it is an important part of her identity. She enjoys some of the new privileges that come with her age, but not some of the responsibilities. Riding the bus is a "grown-up" thing she feels brave about doing every day. Having to help care for the younger Willa Jean after school is not a responsibility she enjoys, however. She feels that by expecting her to play with Willa Jean, who is in preschool, her parents and Mrs. Kemp are not acknowledging the difference in their ages. She no longer enjoys the pretend games that Willa Jean does, but prefers to sit and read to herself. At her new school, she enjoys the fact that it goes only as high as third grade, putting her among the oldest children there.

Ramona looks ahead to the time when she is her sister's age. Beezus is developing a social life and is starting to argue with her parents over her desire to spend more time with her friends. Ramona does not yet want to do the same things Beezus does, but can imagine herself wanting to one day. She is at a transitional age and realizes things are changing every day. Much of Ramona's motivation comes from wanting to cope with these changes in ways that she thinks are "grown-up". She stops herself from arguing with her sister when she realizes she should not. She tries hard to please her teacher, even when she has misunderstood what her teacher expects. Ramona wants to do the right thing, and thinks hard about her actions.



Ramona's bad luck

Ramona is frequently the victim of bad luck and feels she is sometimes blamed for things she cannot help. The first instance in the story is when Ramona's new sandals squeak as she is passing out papers to her class. The squeaking distracts the class and provokes a remark from Ramona's teacher that seems to indicate she thinks Ramona is making the squeaking on purpose. This is the first in a string of similar incidents that lead to Ramona's teacher thinking she is something of a "show-off".

The second unfortunate incident is when Ramona's mother mistakes a raw egg for a hard-boiled egg and Ramona inadvertently smashes the raw egg on her head at lunchtime. This episode sets up one of the main problems of the story, which is Ramona's misunderstanding of her teacher's remarks after the incident.

These two accidents contribute to Ramona's third unlucky episode, throwing up at school. She might have avoided the accident had she mentioned her illness to her mother or teacher, but because of her impression that she will be blamed for her illness she stays quiet until it is too late. She throws up in her classroom and is mortified with embarrassment, convinced that the episode is proof that she really is a nuisance.



Style

Point of View

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 is told in the third person from the point of view of Ramona, a third-grade student who lives with her parents and older sister. The events of the book are interpreted through Ramona's sometimes naive viewpoint as she tries to make sense of the adult world.

Ramona is quick to form opinions of what she sees and hears, and sometimes jumps to incorrect conclusions without knowing the full story. When she overhears her teacher speaking about the incident when Ramona gets egg in her hair, for example, Ramona incorrectly assumes her teacher is calling her a "nuisance." This assumption affects Ramona's choices and behavior as she tries to avoid being a further "nuisance" to her teacher and creates much of the tension in the narrative.

Ramona's point of view is also as a child who is eager to grow up and be treated with more responsibility. As the book opens, she is excited about the prospect of riding the bus to school rather than being taken by her mother, and is also dreading the "little talking-to" about behaving properly that she expects from her mother. She resents being told to play with younger children. She looks up to her older sister, who goes to junior high school and is enjoying some of the extra freedoms that older children are allowed. When her family goes out to a restaurant, she asks to order from the adult menu, even though she finds the serving is too much for her. Ramona is frequently evaluating her own behavior, trying hard to act like an older child.

Setting

The book is set mainly in the home and school of Ramona Quimby, the central character. Ramona lives with her parents and older sister in a residential neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Both of her parents work, and after school, Ramona goes to neighbor's house, where she stays until her parents come home. Most of Ramona's interactions with her family members take place in the setting of their house. Ramona has her own bedroom, where she has arranged an area that has all of her art and craft supplies, as she enjoys drawing and making things.

Ramona attends Cedarhurst Elementary School where she is in the third grade. Ramona's experiences at school are a central part of the book and much of the action takes place there, primarily in the classroom of Mrs. Whaley, her teacher, and in the lunchroom. Ramona also spends some time in the school office, when she has the accident with the eggs in her hair and when she gets sick at school. The book also describes episodes that take place on the school bus to school.

The general time setting is not specified, but the book was first published in 1981 and is contemporary to that time. The action unfolds over the course of the first half of the



school year, beginning in the early autumn and ending in November. The days are still warm enough for sandals as the book opens, and it ends on a rainy November weekend as the family is cheering themselves up with a meal at a restaurant.

Language and Meaning

The main character of *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, is an elementary school student and the language employed is appropriate to a child of her age. The book is aimed young readers and the sophistication of the writing is appropriate to that reading level.

The author uses dialogue frequently throughout the book, and the language is informal and specific to each character. The younger children speak in simple sentences and sometimes make errors in pronunciation. Ramona and her peers speak casually with each other, frequently teasing one another. The adults who converse with Ramona speak in direct sentences aimed at her age level. When Ramona overhears adults speaking to one another, she sometimes misinterprets what they really mean.

The author chooses to write in the third person from the point of view of Ramona, and so the events of the story are filtered through the interpretation of Ramona. The author does not explain fully what is taking place as seen from the point of view of the other characters, but leaves it to the reader to discover along with Ramona when she has made a mistake in her assumptions.

Structure

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 is told from the point of view of Ramona, the main character. It is written in the third person and in the past tense, revealing the thoughts and motivations of Ramona. The story is told in chronological order, beginning with the first day of third grade for Ramona and concluding a few months later in November. The book is divided into nine chapters

The book centers on Ramona's experiences at a new school with a new teacher as well as the financial strain her family is experiencing as her father leaves his full time job to go to school to become a teacher. The first two chapters establish Ramona at her new school and describe the new arrangement where she goes to a neighbor's house after school until her parents come home. The third chapter, called "The Hard-boiled Egg Fad" sets up the main situation between Ramona and her teacher when Ramona misinterprets her teacher's remark to mean that she is being a nuisance at school. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on Ramona's family interactions as they all adapt to getting by on less money as Ramona's father goes to school and her mother takes a job.

In chapters six and seven, the results of Ramona's earlier misinterpretation play out as she tries to avoid being a "nuisance" to her teacher. The misunderstanding is resolved in chapter eight, when Ramona confronts her teacher about the remark and learns she

was mistaken. In the final chapter, the tension within Ramona's family is eased as they enjoy a meal out together at a restaurant.



Quotes

"Ramona Quimby hoped her parents would forget to give her a little talking-to. she did not want anything to spoil this exciting day."

The First Day of School, p. 1

"As the children hopped out of the bus, Ramona felt a little thrill of triumph. She had not been carsick."

The First Day of School, p. 19

"At school she was still not sure how she felt about Mrs. Whaley. Liking a teacher was important, Ramona had discovered when she was in the first grade."

At Howie's House, p. 29

"With all four members of the family leaving at different times in different directions, mornings were flurried in the Quimby household."

The Hard-Boiled Egg Fad, p. 45

"She took a firm hold on her egg, waited until everyone at her table was watching, and whack - she found herself with a handful of crumbled shell and something cool and slimy running down her face."

The Hard-Boiled Egg Fad, p. 50

"Ramona remained silent. She felt mean and unhappy because she wanted to forgive her mother, but something in that dark, deep-down place inside her would not let her."

The Quimbys' Quarrel, p. 64

"Ramona went to her own room, where she curled up on her bed with a book. She wished something nice would happen to her mother and father, something that would help them forget the scene at the dinner table."

The Quimbys' Quarrel, p. 79

"Sunday morning Ramona and Beezus were still resolved to be perfect until dinner time."

The Extra-Good Sunday, p. 81

"Ramona was less comfortable at school. In fact she was most uncomfortable because she was so anxious not to be a nuisance to her teacher. She stopped volunteering answers, and except for the bus ride and Sustained Silent Reading she dreaded school."

Supernuisance, p. 99

"She felt safe, knowing her mother was watching over her. Safe, but sick."

The Patient, p. 116

"Ramona, still feeling weak, moped around the house for another day worrying about her book report. If she made it interesting, Mrs. Whaley would think she was showing



off. If she did not make it interesting, her teacher would not like it."
Ramona's Book Report, p. 134

"Ramona snuggled inside her car coat, feeling cozy enclosed in the car with the heater breathing warm air on her nice family. She was a member of a nice, sticking-together family, and she was old enough to be depended upon, so she could ignore - or at least try to ignore - a lot of things."
Rainy Sunday, p. 177



Topics for Discussion

What worries Ramona about her parents? How does she address her worries?

How does Ramona resolve the conflict with her teacher?

How does Ramona want to be treated by older people? How does she treat younger children?

What finally motivates Ramona to make her book report "interesting"?

Ramona does not always make the right decision or correct interpretation of events. Is the author sympathetic to Ramona? Are the other characters?

Ramona demands "accuracy" from everyone. Why is this?

Does Ramona share any of the blame for the predicaments she finds herself in?