

Henry Huggins

by Beverly Cleary

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Kathleen Greenholdt

A Perma-Bound Production

Synopsis

This novel follows a year in the life of young Henry Huggins, whose life seemed dull until he found Ribsy, the stray dog that made Henry's world fun and exciting. Each chapter of the book deals with a separate surprising antic in Henry's daily activities.

Biographical Sketch

Beverly Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon, in 1916. She holds two bachelor's degrees, one from the University of California, Berkeley (1938), and the other from the University of Washington, Seattle (1939). She is the mother of three children, including a set of twins, and she has worked as both a children's author and a librarian. Her books have received numerous awards, including the Newbery Medal for *Dear Mr. Henshaw* in 1984.

Critic's Corner

Henry Huggins was originally published in 1950, and it is part of a series about Henry and his friends. The book was named an American Library Association Notable Book in 1950, and, in 1972, it received the New England Round Table of Children's Librarians Honor Book award.

General Objectives

1. To learn how to care for pets
2. To see the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions
3. To explore friendship and love

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the character and motivations of Henry
2. To learn about Henry's special friendship with his dog Ribsy

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One

Henry finds a stray dog and asks his mother if he may keep him. His mother agrees, but she says that Henry must take the dog home on the bus. Henry, after a couple failed attempts, smuggles "Ribsy" onto a bus. The dog, however, gets loose and wreaks havoc. Just when the bus driver is going to kick the dog off of the bus, the police arrive and escort Henry and Ribsy home. Henry wonders if he is going to go to jail. This is not the case, however. Henry's parents had simply worried about him and had called the police.

Vocabulary

exasperated, p. 12 - very annoyed
gloated, p. 25 - said with mean-spirited joy

Class Discussion

1. What was Henry's life like before he found Ribsy?
(Henry thought that it was uneventful. He had a regular routine of going to the YMCA after school on Wednesday to go swimming for one hour. He felt that this "was fun but not really exciting." Henry also thought that the most interesting things that had ever happened to him were having his tonsils taken out, and falling out of a cherry tree and breaking his arm as a result. These things are not very happy events, even if they are memorable.)
2. How does Ribsy "win over" Henry?
(Ribsy looks at Henry with big brown eyes that stare longingly at Henry's ice cream cone. The dog wags his tail, and swallows when Henry swallows. The dog also follows Henry.)
3. What problems does Henry encounter when he tries to take Ribsy home?
(The first bus driver will not allow the dog on the bus, because he is not in a box. Henry puts the dog in a box, but it is not covered, and the second driver will not let the dog ride. Finally, Henry buys a shopping bag and puts Ribsy in it. He also covers the top of the dog with string and paper. This time Ribsy makes it onto the bus undetected, until he breaks out of the bag. Then, he runs all over the bus, knocking over passengers and their packages. The bus driver is just about to kick the dog and Henry off the bus when the police arrive and escort the pair home.)

Chapter Two

Henry buys two guppies at the pet store and they multiply rapidly. Soon, Henry must use all of his mother's canning jars as homes for the fish. Also, he cannot go outside and play with his friends because taking care of the fish occupies all of his time. Finally, his mother needs her jars returned, so Henry must reluctantly part with his fish. He sells them back to the pet store, and buys a catfish instead. Catfish, he learns, rarely reproduce like guppies.

Vocabulary

seethed, p. 51 - was overfilled
astounded, p. 51 - shocked
thermostat, p. 53 - a device for setting and measuring temperature

Class Discussion

1. Explain how Henry must care for the guppies.
(He cannot have too many fish in one bowl or jar, because the water gets dirty. He keeps snails with the fish to keep the water clean, too. He must keep the fish warm, so that they will not get the sickness *ichthyophthirius*, which causes them to be covered with white spots. He also must feed the fish a tiny pinch of food each day. To transfer the fish from one container to the next, Henry must fill a jar with hot water and allow it to cool, because the fish cannot live in cold water from the faucet. The fish are tropical, so they need warm water.)
2. How does Henry feel when he must get rid of his fish?
(He is sad, because he has become attached to each one. Also, he enjoys taking care of them. On the other hand, he would like to go outside and play with his friends, and the responsibility of caring for the fish has completely taken over his free time. Also, the fish have crowded his room, and he must spend all of his allowance for their needs.)

Chapter Three

Henry wants to buy a football, but he does not have enough money because he has spent so much taking care of his various pets. Scooter comes over to play because his grandmother just gave him a new football. While he and Henry are tossing the ball, Henry accidentally throws it into the window of a passing car. Scooter says that it is Henry's fault that the ball is lost and demands that he replace it. Henry decides to make money to buy a ball by catching night crawlers for his neighbor. His mother and father help him catch the last ones, and Henry earns the required cash. However, a man returns the lost football, so Henry can buy himself a ball with the money he has earned.

Vocabulary

argyle, p. 72 - a knitted pattern of intersecting diamond shapes
floodlighted, p. 74 - lit with large, very bright lights called floodlights

Class Discussion

1. Do you think it was right for Scooter to force Henry to replace the football?
(Allow students to debate this point. Perhaps it was both boys' fault that the football was lost. It was an accident.)
2. How does Henry earn the money to replace the football?
(He hunts night crawlers for his neighbor, Mr. Grumbie, who uses them for fishing. Henry's mother and father must help Henry collect enough of the worms to pay for a new football.)

Chapter Four

Henry was tired of performing in school plays, yet he is assigned to be a little boy who wears pajamas and is kissed by a girl in the Christmas operetta. His friends tease him, and he tries to think of ways to get out of his role, but he is unsuccessful. However, one day Ribsby comes to rehearsal and knocks green scene paint all over Henry. Because the paint will not come out for a long time, Henry does not have to be the little boy in the play. Instead, he will play the Green Elf, a less embarrassing role.

Vocabulary

operetta, p. 80 - a mini opera, or a short play with songs
cuspid, p. 82 - a pointed tooth
taffeta, p. 88 - a stiff, shiny fabric
prompted, p. 95 - assisted a performer with lines during a rehearsal

Class Discussion

1. Why doesn't Henry want to be in the Christmas operetta?
(He is embarrassed, because he feels he had made a fool of himself in previous class plays. For example, he had to play a tooth once, after which the kids in his school teased him by calling him *Sir Cuspidor*. Now, he will portray a little boy dressed in pajamas who must be kissed by a girl. Already the kids are teasing him about being a "little boy". Henry also happens to be the shortest boy in his class, so he is probably self-conscious about that fact.)
2. How does Ribsby save the day for Henry?
(He runs into the auditorium where Henry has rehearsal. Mothers of some children are transforming Easter bunny costumes from another play into polar bear suits for a polar bear chorus. Scooter is painting sets. Scooter mocks Ribsby, saying that he is a dumb dog. Then Scooter bets Henry that Ribsby cannot climb a stepladder like his own dog. Henry gets the dog to do so, but Ribsby will not come down. Miss Roop discovers Ribsby and demands that he be taken out of the auditorium. However, Ribsby scratches himself and knocks over a can of green paint, which spills all over Henry's head. Now, Henry does not have to portray the little boy in the operetta.)

Chapter Five

Henry decides to enter Ribsby in a dog show. All the other kids in the neighborhood do the same. Although he is a mutt, Henry bets Scooter that Ribsby will win a silver cup. (Scooter always makes fun of Ribsby.) Ribsby misbehaves at the dog show and rolls around in some dirt. To cover the dirt, Henry decides to sprinkle the dog with some white powder. Unfortunately, the powder turns out to be pink. Ribsby does win a silver cup, because he is the most unusual looking dog in the show.

Vocabulary

pedigree, p. 111 - a record of pure-bred ancestors
mongrel, p. 113 - a mutt

Class Discussion

1. As the day wears on at the dog show, does Henry think that Ribsby will win a prize?
(No. The dog behaves poorly in the show, tangling Henry in the clothesline and rolling in dirt. Also, Ribsby causes a dog fight. Henry cannot understand why his dog is still in the competition as the day goes on. He just wants to go home and give his thirsty pet some water from his own dish.)
2. Why does Ribsby win a silver cup?
(The judges think that Ribsby is the most unusual dog in the show because he is pink. They do not think that Ribsby is a "rare breed", as Henry had hoped. They simply think that he shows originality in color and behavior.)
3. Describe how Ribsby feels during the competition.
(Ribsby thinks that he is better than the other dogs, growling at them sometimes. For example, when the setter wins "best of show", Ribsby snarls at him. Also, Henry thinks that Ribsby is pleased when he wins a silver cup. Evidence of this is when Ribsby drinks water out of the cup.)

Chapter Six

Henry and his friends are in an argument when a strange boy approaches and says that he saw a picture of Ribsy in the paper after the show. The boy says that Ribsy was his dog before Henry found him. The kids decide to let Ribsy choose with whom he will go home, Henry or the stranger. Henry's friends are hopeful that he will be selected. Finally, Ribsy does choose Henry, but Henry says that the other boy may visit the dog. Henry's friends are happy that he won, and they do not argue any more. Even Scooter is pleased that Ribsy will be able to stay in the neighborhood.

Vocabulary

astride, p. 143 - with legs on both sides

Class Discussion

1. How does Henry feel about the possibility of losing Ribsy?
(He is unhappy. He found Ribsy a year ago and has taken good care of him and offered him much love. He is very proud of his dog. Also, he feels that Ribsy has brought excitement into his life and that things would be dull without him.)
2. Explain why Scooter speaks on behalf of Ribsy.
(Perhaps Scooter was jealous of Henry, because he had such a popular dog. Underneath all of his teasing, Scooter really likes Ribsy and does not want to see him leave Klickitat Street. Also, Henry is Scooter's friend, and Scooter probably feels sorry for him.)
3. Why do you think Ribsy chooses Henry over the stranger?
(Henry has taken good care of Ribsy over the last year, buying him his own dish, feeding him well, and buying him horse meat once a week from Mr. Pennycuff at the pet store. He also grooms him well and plays with him. He loves Ribsy, formerly called "Dizzy", who had been emotionally neglected by the previous owner.)

Activities

1. Have your class draw or paint pictures of the chaotic bus scene on pages 22-24.
2. Ask your students to visit a pet shop to compare prices of today with the prices of pet items in the book. Then have them write summaries of their findings, indicating the percentage levels of inflation.
3. Using books with photographs, teach your class about the dog types on page 117 as well as other dogs.
4. Ask a veterinarian to visit your class to talk about the physical structure of dogs or fish.
5. Make hanging mobiles with fish and other things that would be found in a fish bowl (such as snails, plants, and representations of water).
6. Build a class aquarium, and assign students turns at taking care of the fish.
7. Perform a class or school operetta, and assign students acting and backstage crew roles.

8. Ask students to write poems about their favorite animals, whether they be their own pets or animals in their neighborhood (such as a neighbor's dog or a bird in the yard).
9. Have students write essays about the most exciting things that have happened in their lives.
10. Ask students to add a chapter to the book by explaining what it was like for Henry to live with green hair.

Other Award-Winning Books by the Author

Dear Mr. Henshaw, 1983

Ramona and Her Father, 1977

The Mouse and the Motorcycle, 1965

Jean and Johnny, 1959

Vocabulary Test

Match the definitions to their words. Place the letter of the definition in the space provided.

_____ 1. gloat

_____ 2. prompt

_____ 3. astound

_____ 4. astride

_____ 5. mongrel

_____ 6. cuspid

_____ 7. seeth

_____ 8. argyle

_____ 9. exasperate

_____ 10. taffeta

a. pointed tooth

b. with legs on both sides

c. annoy

d. mutt

e. assist with lines

f. shiny fabric

g. say with mean-spirited joy

h. shock

i. knitted pattern of diamonds

j. overfill

Comprehension Test A

True or False (25 points)

Mark each statement "T" for "True" or "F" for "False".

- _____ 1. When Henry found Ribsy, he fed him a candy bar.
- _____ 2. Scooter and Henry were the same age.
- _____ 3. When the story began, Henry was in third grade.
- _____ 4. Henry once played a tooth in a play.
- _____ 5. Ribsy won a gold cup at the dog show.
- _____ 6. Ribsy was a mixed breed dog.
- _____ 7. Henry went to lift weights at the YMCA after school on Wednesdays.
- _____ 8. Henry finally got Ribsy on the bus by putting him in a closed box.
- _____ 9. Henry's catfish had many babies.
- _____ 10. Once a week, Henry bought horse meat for Ribsy.

Multiple Choice (25 points)

Circle the correct answer.

- 1. Henry lived on _____ Street.
a. Klickity-clak b. Klickitat c. Klinkletat
- 2. Henry filled the gallon _____ jar with hot water for the fish
a. pickle b. mayonnaise c. jelly
- 3. The football that Henry wanted was made of _____ .
a. rubber b. leather c. plastic
- 4. In the Christmas operetta, Henry would have worn _____ if he had portrayed the little boy.
a. pajamas b. a nightshirt c. a sweat suit
- 5. Henry had to tie a _____ to Ribsy's collar for the dog show.
a. leash b. jump rope c. clothesline
- 6. Henry was the _____ boy in his class.
a. shortest b. youngest c. smartest
- 7. The man who returned the football said that he could not stop when it was thrown because he was going to _____ .
a. his workplace b. the hospital c. the church
- 8. Ribsy's previous name was _____ .
a. Mitsy b. Dizzy c. Rizzy
- 9. If Henry's fish had caught ichthyophthirius, they would have been covered with _____ spots.
a. black b. red c. white
- 10. _____ bought Scooter a new football.
a. Henry b. Scooter's father c. Scooter's grandmother

Story Identification (25 points)

In a sentence or two, explain the significance of each of the following in the story.

1. a photo in the newspaper
2. Sir Cuspidor
3. talcum powder
4. policemen
5. worms

Essay (25 points)

In paragraph form, explain how Henry's life became more exciting during his first year with Ribsy.

Comprehension Test B

Fill-In the Blank (25 points)

Complete each sentence with the correct word(s).

1. In order to buy a new football for Scooter, Henry set out to catch _____.
2. In the Christmas play, Henry was at first assigned the part of the _____.
3. Before he met Ribsby, one of Henry's most memorable events was when his _____ were removed.
4. The fish that Henry first bought were called _____.
5. When he covered Ribsby with pink powder, Henry hoped the judges would think his dog was a rare _____.
6. When Henry found Ribsby, the dog was infested with _____.
7. Henry put _____ in the fish bowl to help keep the water clean.
8. White _____ costumes for the Christmas operetta had been used as Easter bunny suits in another play.
9. When Henry sold the fish back to the pet store, he bought a _____.
10. Ribsby climbed a _____ in the auditorium where Henry was rehearsing.

Quotation Identification (25 points)

Name the character who said each quote.

- _____ 1. "It's all your fault. You threw the ball."
- _____ 2. "Let's see. He needs two hundred and twenty-eight more. It shouldn't take long to catch them."
- _____ 3. "Say, do you suppose I could come over to see him sometimes?"
- _____ 4. "I am starting to pit the apricots. You'll have to hurry!"
- _____ 5. "Jeepers, I don't know what this neighborhood would have done without Ribsby."
- _____ 6. "Well. I don't know. Do you think you ought to be arrested?"
- _____ 7. "You read what is typed on that paper!"
- _____ 8. "I'm going salmon fishing in the Columbia River in the morning."
- _____ 9. "I would have returned it sooner, but I couldn't leave the kids."
- _____ 10. "No, I haven't had any skunks for a long time."

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Beezus | f. Mrs. Huggins |
| b. Miss Roop | g. Man with football |
| c. Scooter | h. Ribsby's former owner |
| d. Mr. Pennycuff | i. Mr. Grumbie |
| e. Policeman | j. Mr. Huggins |

Story Identification (25 points)

In a sentence or two explain the significance of each of the following in the story.

1. the wet grass at the park
2. mixed breed
3. Klickitat Street
4. an ice cream cone
5. the typewriter

Essay (25 points)

In paragraph form, discuss the friendship that Henry and Scooter shared.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. g | 6. a |
| 2. e | 7. j |
| 3. h | 8. i |
| 4. b | 9. c |
| 5. d | 10. f |

Comprehension Test A

True or False (25 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Multiple Choice (25 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. b |
| 3. b | 8. b |
| 4. a | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. c |

Story Identification (25 points)

1. a photo in the newspaper - Ribsy's former owner recognized the dog's picture in the paper after Ribsy won a prize in the dog show.
2. Sir Cuspidor - Henry's school friends teased him by calling him this name after he portrayed a tooth in a play.
3. talcum powder - Henry covered Ribsy with pink talcum powder for the dog show.
4. policemen - Two policemen found Henry on the bus when he was late going home after he first met Ribsy.
5. worms - Henry collected these for his neighbor in order to raise money to buy Scooter a new football.

Essay (25 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Fill-In the Blank (25 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. night crawlers | 6. fleas |
| 2. little boy | 7. snails |
| 3. tonsils | 8. polar bear |
| 4. guppies | 9. catfish |
| 5. breed | 10. stepladder/ladder |

Quotation Identification (25 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. e |
| 2. j | 7. b |
| 3. h | 8. i |
| 4. f | 9. g |
| 5. a | 10. d |

Story Identification (25 points)

1. the wet grass at the park - Henry and his parents searched for night crawlers there.
2. mixed breed - Ribsy was a mixed breed, better known as a mutt.
3. Klickitat Street - This is where Henry lived.
4. an ice cream cone - When he first met Ribsy, Henry fed the dog an ice cream cone.
5. the typewriter - Henry tried to type a letter to his teacher on a typewriter. He was trying to excuse himself from the Christmas operetta.

Essay (25 points)

Answers will vary.

TEACHER'S NOTES

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