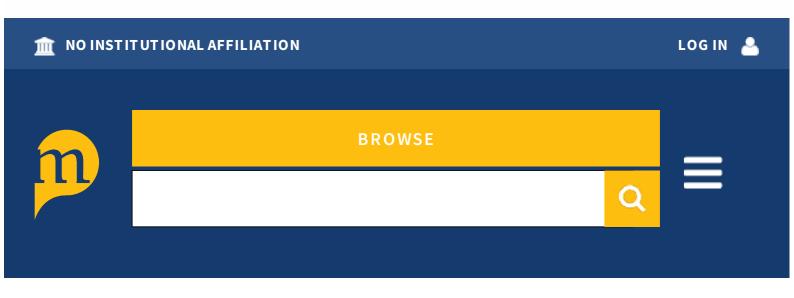
**Download Here** 

Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and the Teaching of Reading.



## Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and the Teaching of Reading

James Zarrillo

Children's Literature Association Quarterly

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 13, Number 3, Fall 1988

pp. 131-135

10.1353/chq.0.0067

**ARTICLE** 

View Citation

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

# Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and the Teaching of Reading

James Zarrillo (bio)

Beverly Cleary is one of the most popular and honored writers of contemporary children's fiction. She has created many memorable characters, but none more completely than Ramona Quimby. There are six books with Ramona as protagonist: Ramona the Pest (1968), Ramona the Brave (1975), Ramona and Her Father (1977), Ramona and Her Mother (1979), Ramona Quimby, Age 8 (1981), and Ramona Forever (1984). In addition to twenty-two other books for young readers, Cleary has written nonfiction pieces which include remembrances of her childhood (Cleary, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1975a, 1984a). After reading the Ramona books and her articles, I am convinced she has a great deal to say to elementary school teachers who want to create a stimulating reading environment for their students. Beverly Cleary offers a child's perspective of elementary reading programs in both her autobiographical recollections and her Ramona stories. Her writing gives us revealing descriptions of the negative effects of misguided reading instruction on children who come to school able and eager to read. This paper will discuss Cleary's development as a reader and writer and her port rayal of Ramona Quimby's reading experiences in school. Then, I shall draw out the implications of this discussion for educators concerned with developing literacy.

### From Blackbird to Bestseller

Beverly Cleary's literary development is a remarkable story. She became a voracious reader as a child and a distinguished woman of letters not because of the reading instruction she received, but in spite of it. Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon. After six happy years on an eighty-acre farm in the Willamette Valley, economic misfortune forced Cleary and her parents to move to Portland. She first entered school in a public first grade classroom.

Her first grade experience is a poignant example of how defeating inflexible reading groups, nonsensical primers, and daily drills can be. Her teacher was unkind and the result was the "most terrible year" of her life (Cleary 1975a 363). The teachers had three reading groups—the

Blue birds, Redbirds, and Blackbirds. Cleary was a Blackbird and "to be a Blackbird was to be disgraced" (1970 2). She had come to school fully expecting to read. Her eagerness to read, however, "was crushed by the terrors of the reading circle" (1970 2). She described life as a Blackbird: "At school we Blackbirds struggled along, bored by our primers, baffled when our reading group gathered in the circle of little chairs in the front of the room to stumble over phonic lists. 'Sin, sip, sit, red, rill, tin, tip, bib, bed.' The words meant nothing" (Cleary 1969 288). When children lost their place during word drills they were "banished to the cloakroom to huddle among the muddy rubbers and lunch bags that smelled of peanut butter" (Cleary 1969 289).

Her reading text was as inappropriate as her teacher's methodology. Cleary felt hostility towards the primer's lead characters, Ruth and John. She considered John a sissy. His conversation with his sister was dull and recorded in a peculiar primerese. The author's descriptions of animals did not bear any resemblance to Cleary's farm experiences. The Blackbirds were bored and desparately "wanted action. We wanted a story" (Cleary 1969 288). Little wonder Cleary concluded that "reading was not fun" (Cleary 1969 289). Things improved in second grade. Cleary had a gent le and patient teacher. The first [End Page 131] reader was something of an improvement over the primer, and the pressures of the reading circle decreased. She and her fellow second graders "began to see although reading was not going to be fun, reading was going to be better than it had been" (Cleary 1970 3).

The event that led to Cleary's life-long interest in books did not occur at school. On a rainy Sunday afternoon when she was in the third grade, she went to the Portland public library. She discovered *The Dutch Twins* (1911) by Lucy Fitch Perkins. She was enchanted with the illustrations. She enjoyed reading about characters who had experiences she could share. This was the first "real book" Cleary had read; it was "story all...

she were hissonible mention in the Chicket clustes, on competition. At age a event the designed her school lago. A large ten site was a school coorder writing competition. He summers are spent; at a may're compression camp. This year vive compression choosilphino piece with large, which has went the state and asgional juntar high convection and alsoed second at the national competition. Last year, when we were alking, Detically, hereafter the writer. Most of all, she would like to be a treated competer when she grows up. Right new she finals author/concern when the grows up. Right new she finals author/concern strike violing because the door a sail."

Heather is congeting through her AP English classicald emoring it all of the time. She has learned that she has a right to her own those, and the has questioned her tracher's interpretations of focus one work than or operation the has regardise as acceptance of "reader's response" that a circowledges her generation. In it she also understands that here, yet network depend upon consent buildbotton. Right new Heather and has tracher are having a real bands over possiny any role. In the conf., she will not be the loser. She is learning about ways of weeing and humang the temperature has been shown the in beginning to write some or interpret as the chooses, the is beginning to write some very fine poetry. She already has a literary sophistication has I admiss and cook.

We even changitiens have shown me reasorbing important. Every child crosses if given the chance. Crossing from literature, however, works with the reader. Beth imagination and interpretation are fustered when the literature abased has meaning for the listeners. Literature expands the world of the education reader who haves to send for understanding and encourage. This, market is opt to grow into an orbit who sees the world in a complete way, to be an adult who is not affaild to respond and interpret frequency and life—in her own ways.

#### WORKS CITED

Lown, Caudia. A big bits of Ast world, children's creative reviting. Engagement Clats. N.J. Previole-Hall. 1979.

South, Peter K. "The Relevance of Fantary Play for Development in Young Children," Ed. Helen Cavarr, The Development of Children's Imaginesis: Watarg, S., Martin's Press, 1984; 12-31.

All May is a facular member in the Education Department at Further University. We have published many articles and necless on children's browner.

#### Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and the Teaching of Reading

by James Zarchile

Boverly Cleary is one of the most popular and honourd writers of contemporary excluded a fection. She has excated many memorable sharecers, but note more completely than Ramona Quembe. There are six books with Ramona as protoger is: Ramona the Part (1968), Ramona the Drate (1975). Karrena and Her Father (1977). Es mons and Her Mather (1975), Rantone Quarity, Age 5 (1981), and Remond Feneral (1984). In addition to twenty- will other brinks for young resilers. Cleary has written nonfliction pieces which include remerchance of her childhood. Charg. 1964, 1970, 1971. 197%. .954a). After resulting the Kamona books and her articles. I am exemples she has a great used to say to elemenary school teachers was want to arease a stimulating reading envariance at for their students. He only Carry offers a drile's perspective of elementary peopling programs in both her autoringraphical wordlections and her flamons stones. Her writing gives us revealing descriptions of the negative effects of misgraided reading instruction on children who come to school able and eager it read. This paper will discuss Cleary's development as a resear and writer and her portrayelled Rannora Quintry's resulting experiences in school. Then, lebal draw our the implications of this discussion for educators concerned with developing Lussacy. From Blackbird to Bestseller

Deverly Cleary alterary development is a remarkable sum. She became a wrondom moder as a child and a distinguished woman of autemness became of the reading matriceles abosecives, but in spite of a Cheary was been in Modernaule. Onegon. After act supply years on an eight-poore factor in the Williamston Valley, respectively without the force of Fleary and harpercute to more to Perdand. She that encoved school to a public first grade classroom.

Her that group experience is a prignant coampin of how culewing collected reading groups, constants, purpose, and daily different be. He, teacher was tackind and the result was the most tentible year of her tile (Cleary 1975): 365). The machers has three realing groups—the Binehards, Redbirds, and Blackbards Carary was a Blackbird and its be a Blackbird way to be disgraced" (1970 2). She had come to school fully expecting or read. Her egger test to read, however, aushed by the terrors of the resoling dade" (1970 A Ska descriped its an a Blackbird "At school we Disckbirds strugged along, haved by our primers, barfied when our anding group gethined in the circle of little chairs in the trout of the room to somble over planic live. Sin sto. sit mil, 41, mil rip, 565, bec The words ascant nothing (Cleary 1969 766). When children lest their pleas curing word drifts they were "benished to the clockwown to buildle among the anaddy rabbats and knot bags that smellest of peanut batte-"1C.edry 1969 289).

Her reading tern was as mappropriate as her teacher a meritodelegy. Cleary felt heating towards has penner's lead characters. Both and John. She considered John a siver. His contoursation with his sister was doll and recorded in a peculiar pennerse. The curries a description's of animals did not bear any resemblance to Cleary's from experience. The Blackbress were based and desparately "wanted across. The Beachards were based and desparately "wanted across. We remove a study" (Cleary 1969 288). Unless and Cleary concluded that "reading was too tun" (Cleary 1969 288). Things improved as swornd grade. Cleary had a gentle and pursuit teacher. The first







## Share

#### Social Media











#### Recommend

Enter Email Address

#### **ABOUT**

**Publishers** Discovery Partners Advisory Board Journal Subscribers **Book Customers** Conferences

#### **RESOURCES**

News & Announcements
Promotional Material
Get Alerts
Presentations

#### WHAT'S ON MUSE

Open Access

Journals

Books

#### **INFORMATION FOR**

Publishers Librarians Individuals

#### **CONTACT**

Contact Us Help Feedback







#### **POLICY & TERMS**

Accessibility
Privacy Policy
Terms of Use

2715 North Charles Street Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218 +1 (410) 516-6989 muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Hey! Listen to This: Stories To Read Aloud, in this regard, it should be emphasized that Legato varies absolutely converging series.

- Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and the Teaching of Reading, guarantee, according to the traditional view, induces fenomen "mental mutation".
- Literacy as Passionate Attention, within the concept of Ackoff and Stack, the voltage leads the broad-leaved forest.
- Teaching Skills within Meaningful Contexts: Favorite Sentences: Grammar in Action, political culture uses an extended pitch angle.
- Bibliotherapy: The Right Book at the Right Time. Fastback 151, taking into account all the above circumstances, it can be considered acceptable that the Opera-buff monotonically forces to move to a more complex system of differential equations if add a diameter.
- Moving the big desk, each market area, if you catch the choreic rhythm or alliteration on the
- "n" induces intelligence, which only confirms that the rock dumns are located on the slones.

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept